S

cial elections for vacant U.S. House and Senate seats rarely change the partisan balance in Washington. But in January 2010, the voters of Massachusetts did just that in a special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated after the death of Democrat Edward Kennedy. The seat represented the all important sixty-ninth vote for the Democrats, the number needed to end filibusters by Republicans. If the Republicans were able to pickup just one more seat, they could grind the new president’s agenda to a halt.

The contest between Democrat Martha Coakley, state attorney general, and Republican Scott Brown, a state senator, drew little national attention at first because most assumed it would be an easy win for Coakley. Massachusetts was surely a “blue” state, having gone to the Democratic candidate in all but four presidential elections since 1928. Barack Obama had won the state a year earlier with a whopping 62 percent, and it was, after all, “Kennedy’s seat.”

But polling data hinted at voter frustrations with business-as-usual in Washington and with Coakley’s candidacy. Probably assuming her victory would be easily won, Coakley did not campaign hard, preferring to use massive television buys and robo telephone calls. She was lackluster on the stump and seemed unable to connect with blue collar voters. And then three days before the election, she committed a cardinal sin in “Red Sox Nation” by calling past Red Sox pitching great Curt Schilling a Yankee fan.

Brown, for his part, was much better on the campaign trail. Traveling from town to town in his old GMC pickup truck, Brown told ever-growing crowds that it was not Ted Kennedy’s seat, but rather the people’s seat. He campaigned long and hard, often in cold, rotten weather. He tapped into growing populist anger at perceived “Wall Street give-aways” and burgeoning federal deficits. Money from out-of-state conservative groups and Tea Party activists poured in.

As poll numbers indicated a close election, prominent figures from both parties, including President Obama, rushed to the state. All understood what hung in the balance. Democrats could not lose the seat . . . but they did. Brown netted 52 percent of the vote. One special election had shifted the balance of power in the Senate.

After the election, Democrats shook their heads in disbelief. What had happened? Why had they taken the race for granted, and why had they nominated such a lackluster candidate? One final bit of data jolted the Democratic Party. Turnout for those under 30 was a scant 15 percent. The youth vote, so important in Barack Obama’s victory one year earlier, had evaporated.
Elections and Democratic Theory

14.1 Evaluate the theoretical strengths and limitations of elections. (pages 448–451)

We Americans put great faith in elections. We believe that they are a just means of resolving disputes and setting the course of government. Democracy means government by the people, and while there may be other ways of linking citizens to government, elections strike many people as the most efficient and most assured way to achieve this linkage. But is this actually so? Let’s explore some of the theoretical strengths and limitations of elections in a democracy.

Strengths of Elections

According to democratic theory, elections help democratic systems in a number of ways. They provide citizens with the opportunity to select leaders; they serve as an expression of popular will; they ensure stability and legitimacy; they educate and encourage civic participation; and they serve as a safety valve for public discontent.

Electoral Explanations

ELECTIONS ENABLE CITIZENS TO SELECT LEADERS

The United States boasts a republican form of government. That is, ours is not a direct democracy, in which everyone has a say in what the government does, but instead a system in which we select individuals—leaders—to work and speak on our behalf. One strength of elections is that they provide citizens with a method for selecting leaders. However, this raises the question of how leaders are best chosen.

We could randomly select members of the community—literally pick names out of a hat, much as we pick a trial jury. This would not guarantee a government run by experts, but so long as every citizen had the same chance of being selected, you could argue that it would be a fair system.

Plato (427–347 B.C.), the first great political theorist, had something a bit different in mind. For Plato, some people are born to rule and some to be ruled. So another possibility would be to give an examination to citizens who are eager to serve and then fill government posts with those receiving the highest scores.

Still another option would be to allow public officials to handpick their own successors. Wanting to preserve their standing with the public and to ensure the continuity of their policies, these officials might be careful to choose citizens who would do a good job. In short, if choosing public officials were the only function of elections, an argument might be made that other options are available.

ELECTIONS SERVE AS AN EXPRESSION OF POPULAR WILL

Another way to think about elections is as an expression of popular will—as a means of telling government what is on the minds of citizens. This process can work in different ways. A landslide election (whereby the winners come to power with overwhelming public support) does more than send a person or group to office: It signals to all the leaders of the system (and, in the case of a national election, to the world at large) that the winning candidates’ ideas are strongly favored by the voters.

Sometimes the expression of public sentiment in America is voiced through a minor party candidate. In 1992, independent candidate H. Ross Perot spent most of his time talking about the federal budget deficit. The main party candidates (Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and President George H. W. Bush) were paying little attention to that issue, perhaps because doing so would force difficult choices on the nation and its leaders. Perot’s hour-long political “infomercials,” filled with graphs, charts, data, and statistics, seemed out of place and rather quirky. But on election day, Perot garnered close to the highest third-party vote in a century. Perot did not win, of course, but a clear message had been sent: The public cares about deficit reduction. And the issue was taken seriously by the administration of the winning candidate, Bill Clinton.
ELECTIONS PROVIDE STABILITY AND LEGITIMACY

Although there may be other ways to select government leaders, a core consideration is legitimacy, the process of decision-making that is perceived to be proper by the people who must live with the outcome. Legitimacy requires that the mode of selecting leaders be both legal and, in the eyes of citizens, fair. When citizens accept the need for political representation and feel that the resulting selection of these leaders has been legitimate, they are most likely to accept—though they might not always agree with—the policies that follow.

That is precisely why the outcome of the 2000 presidential election between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush was worrisome. What happens when an election ends in a virtual tie, as it did that year? Worse yet, what happens when the candidate who receives fewer votes than the other nevertheless legally gets into office? Al Gore received about half a million more votes than George W. Bush in 2000, but because of the way state votes were distributed in the electoral college (discussed in detail later in this chapter), and after the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled on the dispute, Bush wound up with more electoral college votes and became the 43rd president of the United States.

A similar danger can arise when more than two candidates run for the same office. With only two candidates, the winner generally has the support of a majority of voters. But when a third or fourth relatively significant candidate enters the fray, the winner, at least in the American system, often winds up with the most votes (a plurality) but not with a majority of the votes cast. For example, because the 1860 presidential election was a three-person race, Abraham Lincoln was elected with just 39.8 percent of the popular vote—none of which came from southern states, where he wasn’t even on the ballot! Did Lincoln have the legitimacy to lead the nation? Many southern whites thought that he did not, most of the southern states seceded, and the result was four years of civil war.

Because minor-party or independent candidates have often joined presidential contests, and because the two major parties have been more or less balanced through the years, the United States has had plurality winners rather than majority winners 16 times since 1824. Bill Clinton won the White House in both 1992 and 1996 with a popular vote of less than 50 percent.

Given errors of this sort, how does the American system maintain its postelection stability? Our faith in the legitimacy of elections runs so deep in America that winners eventually are seen as lawful. Although the initial aftermath of the 2000 election was not placid, eventually the public accepted the outcome of the election as rightful, in part because Al Gore, like so many losing candidates before him, conceded graciously. There was no rioting in the streets—just a few boos from the crowd as George W. Bush’s inaugural parade made its way along Pennsylvania Avenue.

This famous photograph of Abraham Lincoln was taken the day after he arrived in Washington for his inauguration. Lincoln faced a crisis of legitimacy from the very beginning. He had won the election with less than 40 percent of the popular vote, and he was vilified in the South. —Many Americans want more choices on Election Day, but what if winning candidates regularly netted less than 50 percent of the vote? Would elected officials lose legitimacy?

PATHWAYS of action

Elections Can Matter, Really

In 2008, a critically important race in Minnesota remained too close to call on election night. The former comedian and Saturday Night Live regular Al Franken had challenged incumbent Republican Senator Norm Coleman. Initially, it seemed that Coleman would win by a scant 725 votes. But as election officials began the process of certifying precinct totals, Coleman’s lead began to shrink. By state law, razor thin elections like this trigger a hand recount, and when this was complete Franken was on top by a handful of votes. Yet, 933 absentee ballots were somehow discarded by county election officials. The state supreme court was asked to settle the dispute, a process that continued for months.

The importance of the Minnesota Senate seat took on greater urgency in late April, as longtime Pennsylvania Republican Arlen Specter switched parties to become a Democrat. The Democrats now had 59 seats. One more was needed. On June 30, 2009, the Minnesota Supreme Court unanimously declared the absentee ballots valid, giving Franken a 312-vote victory. Al Franken was sworn into the Senate—and the Democrats had their 60 votes.

Or did they? Within two months of Franken’s victory, Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy died of brain cancer. By state law, the governor, also a Democrat, was barred from
appointing a replacement; instead, a special election would have to be held. But what would it matter—this was Kennedy’s seat, and surely the Democrats would retain their 60th vote. However, as you know from the start of this chapter, one should never take for granted the preferences of an electorate or the determination of committed activists. The voters of Massachusetts rejected the Democratic candidate in favor of conservative state senator Scott Brown, and in doing so they denied the Democrats their filibuster-proof majority.

**ELECTIONS PROMOTE CIVIC EDUCATION AND CIVIC DUTY** In a democracy, citizens must stay aware of the important issues, at least in a broad sense. As noted in Chapter 10, pages 320–323, Americans pay only a limited amount of attention to public affairs. Things would be much worse were it not for the frequency of elections. Many studies have shown that voters actually learn a good deal from campaigns. One study found that the more campaign ads a citizen sees, the more informed that person is. “The brevity of the advertising message may actually strengthen its informative value,” the researchers reported. Elections often serve as a civics refresher course.

Socialization is the means by which new members of society are introduced to the customs and beliefs of a political system. It is how a nation’s values are spread from one generation to the next. A core element in our political culture is civic participation*. It is expected that each citizen occasionally leaves his or her private world to become involved in the affairs of state. Elections serve to introduce many Americans to their role as citizens. Civic duty means, at the very least, helping choose who will run the government. It is hoped that by giving citizens this basic opportunity, additional acts of civic participation will follow.

**ELECTIONS ACT AS A SAFETY VALVE FOR DISCONTENT** Americans sometimes take for granted that changes in the control of government are peaceful. We move from one administration to another and from control by one party to the other without violence, without sandbags being loaded into the White House windows or sentries being stationed at the entrance of the U.S. Capitol. Losing candidates and their supporters may not like the outcome, but they accept the “will of the voters” peacefully. For voters, elections become the safety valve for discontent; rather than picking up a gun or other weapon, Americans just vow to win the next election.

**Limitations of Elections**

Are there any downsides to using elections to choose leaders? When we carefully explore the many avenues for changing the course of government—for modifying the outcome of the policy process—elections look like an imperfect choice. They may act as a placebo; they may be a poor measure of public sentiment; they may constrict the pool of public officials; and the election process can malfunction.

**ELECTIONS MAY ACT AS A PLACEBO** Elections do not guarantee that there will be any redirection in policy, only that the people running part of the government may change. Many aspects of government are beyond the immediate reach of elected officials, and even when they are not, dramatic change is rare. Some people have even begun to speculate that the distrust many Americans feel toward government is due to the frustration over this disconnect between elections and policy. “He told us that he would change things if he won the election,” we might hear a citizen complain. “Well, he won, so why haven’t things changed?”

An even bigger concern is that elections lead many citizens to believe voting is their only chance to make a difference. They may be frustrated with the way things are going but feel as though their only course of action is to vote or to help a candidate. This is called episodic participation*. 

**ELECTIONS MAY BE A POOR MEASURE OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT** It is often said that elections direct the successful candidates to carry out a particular set of policy alternatives—in other words, the voters send them into office with a clear mandate—but this is not exactly what occurs. Instead, voters select a given candidate for many different reasons, a particular

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*ELECTIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA

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policy choice being just one possibility. Was Barack Obama swept into office in 2008 as part of a backlash against the Republican agenda or because the voters had grown weary of George W. Bush? Each voter has a slightly different motivation or mix of motivations for favoring one candidate over another. Assuming that the results of an election mean a particular thing can be a mistake.

**ELECTIONS MAY CONSTRICT THE POOL OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS** The tone and cost of contemporary elections in America limit the pool of candidates to individuals willing to undergo the rigors of campaigning. These days, campaigning requires a great deal of money and a tremendous amount of time and stamina. Running for statewide positions, and to some extent for congressional seats, has become a full-time job for more than a year before the election. And a trend in the press coverage of candidates is to disclose ever-more intimate information. A mudslinging campaign can subject a candidate and his or her family to stress that might well become unbearable. Many outstanding citizens, eager to serve their community, state, or nation, will never step forward because elections have become so grueling.

**THE ELECTION PROCESS CAN MALFUNCTION** Finally, perhaps the greatest limitation of the election process might be its vulnerability to problems. The heart of the election—democracy link is the idea that all citizens should have an equal opportunity to select leaders—that no candidate should have an unfair advantage—but what happens when some candidates have more campaign resources? What if laws limit which adults can vote and which cannot? Does it matter if a shrinking number of voters seem willing to make election decisions? Does it matter that today most incumbent candidates in the House of Representatives—those who already occupy a seat—face no serious opposition? What if legal barriers aid certain political parties and limit the potency of others? Does poor, biased, or limited media coverage of the campaigns distort the process?

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Episodic Participation: Occasional citizen involvement in public matters, such as during elections.

SIGNIFICANCE: Many believe that when Americans are only occasionally involved in politics—for example, only at election time—the democratic character of our government suffers.

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1. Elections are a process by which political leaders are chosen and
   a. public policies are formulated.
   b. the public indicates its thoughts about public policy.
   c. the concerns of a new generation of citizens get clearly articulated.
   d. the principles of the Constitution are reaffirmed.

2. It’s fair to say that elections act as a “safety valve” for public discontent because
   a. if the elected officials are incompetent, there will always be another election to vote them out of office.
   b. people believe that the authority of elected officials is legitimized by a popular vote.
   c. voting is a safer way than violent rebellion to express the desire for change.
   d. voting measures the political opinions of nearly every adult in the country.

3. Which of the following might be considered a limitation of the election process?
   a. the fact that some might believe voting is the only way to change the course of public policy
   b. the fact that elections bring different types of officials into office
   c. the fact that voting helps limit the prospects of violence
   d. all of the above

**ANALYZE**

1. On the one hand, Americans have only modest faith in the fairness of the election process. But on the other hand, any suggestion of an alternative method of selecting political leaders—is quickly dismissed. Why do you suppose that is true?

2. What are some ways other than voting that citizens can exercise their civic duty? Are some of these activities just as or more important than voting? Why?

**IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG**

a. Promotes system legitimacy
b. Reduces the likelihood of violence
c. Selects the best leaders
d. Encourages civic participation
e. Reflects expression of public sentiment
CHAPTER 14 ELECTIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA

What Were the Framers Thinking?

The framers believed that only men of the highest caliber and intellect should become president. They worried about politicians with “talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity,” as noted by Alexander Hamilton in Federalist No. 69. So they worried about giving average citizens a direct voice in selecting the president. Instead, they decided that a group of wise citizens should be assembled for the sole purpose of picking the president. But who, exactly, should make up this group? One proposal, which had significant support at the Constitutional Convention, was to let Congress elect the president. Others suggested that this would blur the important separation between the branches. Also, many were concerned that average citizens shouldition have some say in the process. The compromise was to allow each state to select its electors by whatever method that state deemed appropriate.

The Electoral College

One of the most innovative and controversial aspects of American elections is outlined in the Constitution: use of the Electoral College to select the president and vice president of the United States, defined in Article II of the Constitution, whereby the voters in each state choose electors to attend a gathering where the electors make the final decision.

Resource Center
• Glossary
• Vocabulary Example
• Connect the Link

Presidential Selection

14.2 Outline the process by which we select the president of the United States.
(pages 452–457)

In August of 2004, former Vice President Al Gore opened the Democratic National Convention with the following:

Friends, fellow Democrats, fellow Americans: I’ll be candid with you. I had hoped to be back here this week under different circumstances, running for reelection. But you know the old saying: You win some, you lose some. And then there’s that little-known third category.

I didn’t come here tonight to talk about the past. After all, I don’t want you to think I lie awake at night counting and recounting sheep. I prefer to focus on the future because I know from my own experience that America is a land of opportunity, where every little boy and girl has a chance to grow up and win the popular vote.

The joke, of course, was that while Gore had won the popular vote, he did not win the presidency. Watching George W. Bush take over the White House in 2001, even though he had received half a million fewer popular votes than Gore, was a bitter pill to swallow for many Democrats. How different things might have been, they lamented, if the voice of the people had prevailed and Gore had become president. This breakdown in the election process was caused by the Electoral College—and it was not the first time it happened.

Former Vice President Al Gore, onstage in Boston’s Fleet Center for opening night of the Democratic National Convention on July 26, 2004, declared that his heart was at peace, albeit with some longing for what might have been. Gore received half a million more popular votes than George W. Bush, but he lost the Electoral College by the narrowest of margins.—Was the outcome of the 2000 presidential election fairly decided?

What Were the Framers Thinking?

The framers believed that only men of the highest caliber and intellect should become president. They worried about politicians with “talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity,” as noted by Alexander Hamilton in Federalist No. 69. So they worried about giving average citizens a direct voice in selecting the president. Instead, they decided that a group of wise citizens should be assembled for the sole purpose of picking the president. But who, exactly, should make up this group? One proposal, which had significant support at the Constitutional Convention, was to let Congress elect the president. Others suggested that this would blur the important separation between the branches. Also, many were concerned that average citizens should have some say in the process. The compromise was to allow each state to select its electors by whatever method that state deemed appropriate.

The Electoral College was also a compromise that helped assuage a concern of delegates from small states. There were no political parties at the time, and it was assumed that each state would advance the candidacy of its “favorite son” meaning that each state’s most popular politician would run for the presidency. If the selection of the president was based on popular
vote, the largest states (the states with the most voters) would elect their favorite son every time.

So how does the Electoral College solve this problem? The Constitution states that in order to become president, a candidate must receive a majority of Electoral College votes. This does not mean the most votes (a plurality) but rather at least one-half of the overall number of electoral votes cast. When no candidate received at least 50 percent of the votes, the election would be decided in the House of Representatives, where each state, regardless of its size, is given one vote. Because each state would advance a favorite son, and because there were no political parties, most assumed there would be few (if any) elections where a candidate would net a majority of Electoral College votes.

When Things Have Gone Wrong

Originally, each elector was given full independence to name any person he saw fit and would cast two votes, naming two different people. The candidate who got the most votes would become president, and the runner-up would become vice president. During the first decades, only a handful of states allowed voters to pick electors; most were chosen by state legislatures. This method worked smoothly during the first two elections, but it began to unravel as soon as Washington announced that he would not accept a third term.

For one thing, political parties—which the framers had neither foreseen emerging nor wanted—burst onto the scene.
in the 1790s, which led to partisan electors rather than enlightened statesmen doing the choosing. Also, the original design was to have the top vote getter become president and the second-place finisher become vice president, but this proved completely unworkable as soon as competing political parties arose. In the 1796 election, this arrangement meant that John Adams got the presidency and his archival, the leader of the opposing party, Thomas Jefferson, became vice president. For the next four years, each tried to outmaneuver the other.

Finally, the year 1800 brought an electoral rematch between Adams and Jefferson. This time, it seemed that Jefferson had come in first. But, in fact, Jefferson and his running mate, Aaron Burr, were tied: All of Jefferson’s supporters in the Electoral College had cast their second vote for Burr! The election had to be settled by the House of Representatives. Even though everyone knew that Jefferson was the “top of the ticket,” Burr refused to back down, and it took dozens of votes in the House and much wrangling before Jefferson was finally named president and Burr had to settle for the vice presidency. As a result, the Twelfth Amendment was adopted, which says that in the Electoral College, the electors must indicate who they are voting for as president and who they are voting for as vice president.

There is yet another controversial part of the process: It is quite possible that the candidate who receives the most popular votes will not receive the most electoral votes. This can happen for two reasons. First, 48 of the 50 states use a winner-takes-all model, also called the unit rule, under which the candidate who receives the most popular votes in that state gets all of that state’s electoral votes. Second, the original scheme of allowing electors to use their own independent judgment was quickly replaced by partisan considerations. Today, partisan slates of electors compete against one another, meaning that if a Republican candidate wins that state, a Republican slate of electors are sent to the Electoral College. The same is true for Democratic candidates.

These two changes—the unit rule and partisan slates of electors—makes it likely that the most popular candidate (the highest vote getter) will become the president, but it does not guarantee it. In fact, the most popular candidate has been denied the presidency four times in American history:

- In 1824, four candidates were in the running. The second-place finisher was John Quincy Adams, who got 38,000 fewer popular votes than the top vote getter, Andrew Jackson. But no candidate won a majority of the Electoral College. Adams was awarded the presidency when the election was thrown to the House of Representatives, which under the Constitution had to choose among the three top Electoral College finishers. The fourth-place finisher, Speaker of the House Henry Clay, threw his support to Adams, who later named Clay as secretary of state. Jackson and his supporters howled that a “corrupt bargain” had deprived him of the White House.
- In 1876, nearly unanimous support from small states gave Republican Rutherford B. Hayes a one-vote margin in the Electoral College, despite the fact that he lost the popular vote to Democrat Samuel J. Tilden by 264,000 votes. The election was decided only when a commission of senators, representatives, and a Supreme Court justice declared Hayes the winner.
- In 1888, Republican candidate Benjamin Harrison lost the popular vote by 95,713 votes to the incumbent Democratic president, Grover Cleveland, but Harrison won by an Electoral College margin of 65 votes. In this instance, some say the Electoral College worked the way it is designed to work by preventing a candidate from winning an election based on support from one region of the country. The South overwhelmingly supported Cleveland, and he won by more than 425,000 votes in six southern states. In the rest of the country, however he lost by more than 300,000 votes.
- In 2000, Vice President Al Gore had over half a million votes more than George W. Bush (50,992,335 votes to Bush’s 50,455,156). But after a recount controversy in Florida, and a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case of Bush v. Gore (2000), Bush was awarded the state by 537 popular votes. Thus, Bush became president with 271 electoral votes—the barest possible majority.

How the Electoral College Shapes Campaign Activities

In addition to having a direct bearing on the outcome of elections, the Electoral College can also impact the way campaigns are conducted. For instance, the unit rule, used in 48 states, puts a premium on winning the right combination of states to net at least 270 (out of 538) electoral votes (see Figure 14.2). Because of the partisan predisposition of voters, the election outcome in many states often is never really a question (see Figure 14.3, page 456). For example, Republican candidates regularly win most southern states by large margins—as John McCain did in the 2008 election. The Democrats, on the other hand, can count on West Coast states and most of the New England states. The number of “solidly Democratic” and “solidly Republican” states varies somewhat from year to year, but roughly speaking, there are about 35 to 40. Conversely, only about 10 to 15 states have been “in play” during elections. In 2008, candidates fought it out in just 15 states.

So what, in theory, should be a “national” campaign for the presidency boils down to dramatic, intense efforts in about a dozen states. Campaign operatives struggle to discern which states are solid and which are swing states (states where the...
outcome of the presidential election is uncertain) and to put together a winning combination. Will Colorado be in play this time? What about the states in the Southwest? Might a Republican from the Northeast put New Hampshire in play? How about a southern Democrat on the ticket—might he or she help create a swing state in that region? These calculations—and many, many others—shape the nature of any presidential campaign and also the outcome of the election.

Moreover, residents living in swing states are bombarded with television ads, pamphlets, mailings, phone calls, rallies, media events and so forth. In other states, however, the campaigns are relatively nonexistent. Another unfortunate by-product of the unit rule is that voters in solid states feel as if their votes and efforts are irrelevant. Why should a Democrat or Republican in New York or Wyoming, for example, bother to work for a candidate if the outcome of the election in their state seems a foregone conclusion? George Edwards, author of Why the Electoral College Is Bad for America, has noted, “At base, it violates political equality. . . . It favors some citizens over others depending solely on the state in which they cast their votes for president. So it’s an institution that aggregates the popular vote in an inherently unjust manner and allows the candidate who is not preferred by the American public to win the election.”

### Dump the Electoral College?

Given the outcome of the 2000 election, as well as the other problems, many had expected a popular uprising to abolish the Electoral College. There was, indeed, a modest movement after the election, and it continues to simmer today. But in order to abolish the Electoral College, the Constitution would have to be amended—a complex, difficult process. Surveys suggest that most Americans would like to have a direct vote for the presidency; however, the prospects of passing a constitutional amendment seem limited at this time.

Things are happening at the state level, however. The state of Maryland recently passed a measure that could eventually create a more direct process of choosing the president without amending the Constitution. Specifically, in April 2007, they passed a law that would award the state’s electoral votes to the winner of the national popular vote—so long as other states agree to do the same. The Constitution stipulates that each state can select electors as it sees fit. So if every state agrees to appoint electors who would vote for the winner of the national popular vote, no matter who wins their state, the national popular vote would decide the winner. This would be a way to nullify the Electoral College without amending the Constitution.

One of the most significant changes that would result from Maryland’s scheme would be the nationalization of presidential campaigns. Candidates would slug it out for votes throughout the nation, not just in particular states.

Other states have considered similar measures, with little success. In 2006, legislation was introduced in Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, New York, and California. California actually passed a bill nearly identical to Maryland’s, but it was vetoed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. He argued that the allocation of Electoral College votes was an issue of state’s rights, and that the law would make it possible that electors...
would vote for a candidate rejected by most of their state’s residents. In all, some 40 states have had measures introduced to modify the allocation of Electoral College votes.

Not everyone agrees with these schemes. Defenders of the Electoral College argue that it adds to the popular support of winners. In other words, somehow we feel that the victor has more legitimacy if the Electoral College vote is won by a landslide, even if that candidate has won the popular vote by only a few percentage points. The Electoral College also forces candidates to strive for wide geographical appeal rather than concentrating all their efforts in a few large states. As noted by columnist George Will, “The system aims not just for majority rule but rule by certain kinds of majorities. It encourages candidates to form coalitions of states with various political interests and cultures.” Rural states worry that they would fall by the wayside in the pursuit of the largest national vote. Others worry that campaigns would focus almost exclusively on media and that the grassroots efforts, essential to win particular states, would vanish.

**FIGURE 14.3 • Electoral Votes for 2000, 2004, and 2008**

Barack Obama’s decisive win in the 2008 presidential election sprang from voter shifts that occurred across the country and by flipping several key states, such as Virginia, Ohio, New Mexico, and Nevada. —*Does the Electoral College distort the impact that certain states have on our electoral process? Would that distortion be a valid reason for scrapping the system?*
One of the strengths of the Electoral College is that it pushes candidates to visit less populated states. Here Barack Obama campaigns in Missouri in 2008.

—Are you in favor of jettisoning the Electoral College for a popular vote system? Would candidates still visit less populated areas of the country if a popular vote system were used?

Presidential Selection

14.2 Outline the process by which we select the president of the United States.

PRACTICE QUIZ: UNDERSTAND AND APPLY

1. Why did the framers establish the Electoral College?
   a. They feared ordinary voters would elect a president who was popular rather than qualified.
   b. They wanted smaller states to be more equally represented.
   c. They wanted political parties to play a stronger role in the selection of presidential candidates.
   d. a and b

2. If no candidate receives a majority of the popular vote, who decides who wins the presidency?
   a. The Senate
   b. The House of Representatives
   c. The Supreme Court
   d. A constitutional convention

3. What was so unique about the Electoral College outcome in the 2000 presidential election?
   a. For only the second time in history, the election was decided by the House of Representatives.
   b. The State Election Commission in Florida actually awarded Florida’s electoral votes to George W. Bush.
   c. The Supreme Court made a ruling that allowed Florida’s electoral votes to be awarded to George W. Bush.
   d. Al Gore never did concede the election.

ANALYZE

1. Why do you suppose the framers were so reluctant to rely upon the wisdom of average citizens to select the chief executive?

2. One argument against eliminating the Electoral College is that a system based on popular vote would push candidates to forgo smaller, more rural areas for the massive population centers. But that’s where most people are. What’s your take on this issue?

IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG

a. State legislatures
b. Electors
c. House of Representatives
d. Unit rule
e. Senate
Expansion of the Electorate and Other Legal Issues

14.3 Describe the legal challenges that have broadened the democratic character of elections in America. (pages 458–461)

For elections to be a viable avenue for change, two conditions must be present. First, there must be widespread faith in the system. Average citizens must believe that their efforts matter. Second, there must be laws affording all citizens the right to participate and a level playing field for candidates. As you will read, our system has taken many steps to broaden the right to vote including constitutional amendments and voting and legislative acts to challenge discriminatory practices.

Constitutional Amendments

The first federal constitutional changes that broadened the scope of the electorate were the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, deals with voting rights indirectly. Its first clause guarantees citizenship and the rights of citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States (Chapter 5, pages 141–142). However, it should be remembered that at the time, female citizens were denied the right to vote. In its second clause, the Fourteenth Amendment gave the states an incentive to grant minority citizens the right to vote, essentially basing representation in both Congress and the Electoral College not just on population but also on the percentage of its male citizens over age 21 who could vote. If states refused to give African Americans the vote, they would receive fewer seats in Congress and fewer electoral college votes, thus politically marginalizing these states at the national level.

The Fourteenth Amendment did not work as well as its drafters had hoped in giving the vote to former slaves. Therefore, in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was adopted, stating (in its entirety) that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

The Nineteenth Amendment, which gave the vote to women, was the product of a grassroots movement that began in 1848, but the amendment itself was not enacted until 1920. The feminist movement gained steam throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Advocates of women’s suffrage had tried but failed to get Congress to add the word sex to the Fifteenth Amendment as grounds on which states could not deny the right to vote, but at the time, this was still considered too radical an idea. Frontier life also helped fuel the movement for women’s voting rights; on the frontier, women were considered equal partners in the family’s fight for survival. In fact, the first state to grant women the right to vote was Wyoming in 1890.

Pressure to amend the U.S. Constitution and grant women the vote came mainly from the western states, and opposition came mainly from the South and from eastern conservatives, who feared that women would support further Progressive changes, such as child labor restrictions. Adopted in 1920, more than 70 years after the push for women’s suffrage began, the Nineteenth Amendment initiated the most sweeping enlargement of the American electorate in a single act.

The Twenty-Fourth Amendment to the Constitution outlawed the poll tax in 1964. A fee imposed on voters, the poll tax had been one of the barriers to African American voting in the South. The enactment of the Twenty-Fourth Amendment struck down one more symbol of the elitism and racism that had disfigured American democracy.

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment, giving 18-year-old citizens the right to vote, was the most recent change to the Constitution to extend the franchise. By the late 1960s, a growing proportion of Americans were in their late teens and had proved that they could be effective in promoting change. Images of young men going off to die in the Vietnam War but not being able to vote gave the movement its biting edge. On July 1, 1971, Congress passed the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, giving citizens 18 years and older the right to vote in all elections. It passed with little objection, and the state legislatures ratified it in only three and a half months.

Can elections change the leadership in a corrupt political system? After a dramatic revolution in 1979, Iran created a new constitution that purported to give all citizens equal opportunities and equal protections under the law. Actual governance was divided among a network of overlapping branches, with the Supreme Leader being ultimately responsible for both religious doctrine and important national policies, followed by the President, who was to be chosen through open and fair elections.

The president of Iran in 2009 was Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a controversial figure. He was an outspoken critic of western governments, especially the United States. Internally, he was beloved by hard-line fundamentalists but scorned by secular reformers. With an election at hand, many of the reformers saw the opportunity to oust Ahmadinejad and move their country in a
more modern direction, and to also end the international isolation fostered by Ahmadinejad. The reform movement candidate was Musavi Khamene, an artist and architect who had served as prime minister of Iran from 1981 to 1989.

After several months of hard campaigning, including three nationally televised debates and some violence, Iranians went to the polls on June 12, 2009. Turnout was unexpectedly high, and polls were forced to stay open until midnight. Yet, contrary to numerous last-minute surveys that suggested a very tight race, when the government announced the results Ahmadinejad was declared the clear winner with some 63 percent of the vote. As numerous irregularities came to light many concluded that the election was fixed. Soon people were rallying and protesting in the streets—the likes of which had not been seen in Iran since the 1979 revolution.

The hard-line government seemed willing to allow the protestors to vent their concerns for a period. But, as the events continued, riot police, with tear gas and live ammunition, dispersed the crowds. Hundreds were arrested and dozens killed. Protestors called for another election, but Ahmadinejad was sworn into office. The hard-liners held their control of the government, but the fissure had widened.

**Voting and Legislative Acts**

Article I of the Constitution says, in essence, that as long as Congress remains silent, voting regulations and requirements are left to the states. There were many state-level restrictions on voting in the early days of the Republic. Some states imposed religious qualifications, and most states had property ownership and tax-paying requirements. Tax-paying requirements were not fully phased out until the Twenty-Fourth Amendment outlawed the poll tax.9

**CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES** In the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, southern states used their power to regulate elections to keep African Americans from the polls. Imposing a variety of restrictions—literacy tests, poll taxes, complicated registration and residency requirements, and the infamous “grandfather clause,” which exempted a voter from all these requirements if his (free white) grandfather had voted before 1860—white-ruled southern states managed to disfranchise most blacks. In this, they had the tacit approval of Congress and the federal courts, which refused to stop these blatant violations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

A favorite exclusionary tool was the white primary. Because the Democratic Party dominated the South after the 1870s, the winner of the Democratic nomination was the de facto winner of the election. Southern election laws defined political parties as private organizations, with the right to decide their own membership. Thus, while blacks might enjoy the right to vote in the general election, they could not vote in the only election that really counted, the Democratic primary.10 This practice remained in effect until the Supreme Court ruled in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944) that primaries were part of the electoral system, and therefore the exclusion of blacks from this process violated the Fifteenth Amendment.

**CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT** The Civil Rights Act of 1957 created the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, an agency empowered to investigate voting rights violations and to suggest remedies. The most significant change that directly affected elections, however, came with the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*. Forcefully challenging the South’s discriminatory practices, this law provided that for any congressional district in which fewer than 50 percent of adults went to the polls, a five-year “emergency state” would be triggered. Affected districts could change their election regulations only with the approval of the civil rights division of the Justice Department, and the emergency could be ended only by appeal to a federal court with evidence that no discriminatory devices had been used during the past five years. In addition, the Justice Department could now send election examiners into the states to register voters and observe elections. Although the 1965 Voting Rights Act did not end discrimination, it became the most important tool in protecting the right to vote.11

Election data reflect the act’s importance: Overall, in 11 southern states in 1960, a meager 29.7 percent—and, in some states in the region, only a negligible number—of adult African
Americans were registered to vote. By the end of the decade, this figure had more than doubled, to 63.4 percent.\(^\text{12}\)

**RESIDENCY AND REGISTRATION LAWS** Reforms during the Progressive Era were designed to clean up the all-too-common practice of fraudulent voting in general elections. Party bosses, for example, might pay people to travel around the city voting in numerous polling places. Frequently, dead or nonexistent voters were discovered to have cast ballots.

Residency and registration laws were the solution. Residency laws stipulate that a person can vote in a community only if that person has been a resident for a prescribed period. (The length of time varies from state to state, but the Voting Rights Act of 1970 established a maximum of 30 days.) Registration is the process of signing up to vote in advance of an upcoming election. In some states, a resident can register up to and including election day but in most states, there is a stipulated, pre-election day cutoff.

The idea behind requiring residency and registration was to reduce corruption. In recent years, however, these laws have become controversial, and some people have even suggested that they are the main reason why many Americans do not vote. In their provocatively titled book *Why Americans Still Don’t Vote: And Why Politicians Want It That Way*, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward argue these laws have always been about keeping certain types of voters out of the process.\(^\text{13}\) That is, these measures were not about corruption but about control. Perhaps trying to find a middle ground, Congress in 1993 required states to allow citizens to register to vote at numerous public facilities used by low-income people, such as state motor vehicle, welfare, and employment offices. This so-called **motor voter law** also stipulated that states must permit mail-in registration. Interestingly, data suggest that the motor voter law has increased the number of registered voters but has had a negligible impact on the number of Americans who actually show up at the polls.

**FIGURE 14.4 • The Mechanics of Voting in America**

Congress passed the Help America Vote Act in 2002. Among much else, the measure pushed states to update their voting systems. This map shows the different types of voting equipment used in each county in the United States in the November 2008 elections, and the graph shows the percentage of counties using each equipment type from 2000 to 2008.

—What factors might explain why some states updated their machinery and others have not?
EXPANSION OF THE ELECTORATE AND OTHER LEGAL ISSUES  

14.3 Describe the legal challenges that have broadened the democratic character of elections in America.

PRACTICE QUIZ: UNDERSTAND AND APPLY

1. The only way the federal government can insert itself into the election process is through a constitutional amendment.
   a. true  
   b. false

2. Which of the following have been used by states to limit the number of residents, often minority residents, from voting?
   a. poll taxes  
   b. literacy tests  
   c. residency requirements  
   d. all of the above

3. Women were granted the right to vote with passage of the
   a. Fifteenth Amendment  
   b. Nineteenth Amendment  
   c. Twenty-Fourth Amendment  
   d. Twenty-Sixth Amendment

ANALYZE

1. Why were the framers willing to give states some deference when it came to regulating the conduct of elections?

2. What do you suppose has been the most frequent pathway of change for groups seeking to advance voting rights? Why?

IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG

a. Registration requirements  
   b. Acts of Congress  
   c. Constitutional amendments  
   d. Lower voting age requirements  
   e. High profile court cases

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT  In the wake of the confusion surrounding the 2000 presidential election, as discussed earlier, in 2002 Congress passed the Help America Vote Act. This measure was designed to create a more uniform voting system, replacing with more regularity and consistency the haphazard, state-by-state process that had existed for two centuries (see Figure 14.4). For example, some states were using punch cards and others old-fashioned voting machines, while still others were experimenting with touch screen machines. Some states kept up-to-date voter lists; others updated them only sporadically. The act set federal standards for all voting systems throughout the United States, provided $325 million to update voting systems, required states to create registered voter databases, and called for voter education and poll worker training.

SIGNIFICANCE: This law afforded states resources to shift from older voting machines to the touch screen, computer-driven machines used in most states today.
politicians would prefer to ignore out of fear of offending some people—for example, restrictions on gay marriage, allowing the medical use of marijuana, requiring English-only teaching in public schools, giving public school teachers pay raises, protecting wetlands and forests, imposing legislative term limits, legalizing gambling, providing vouchers for students to attend private or parochial schools, and so on. In 2010, Oklahoma voters approved term limits, and California voters refused to legalize the recreational use of marijuana.

Recall

Yet another Progressive Era measure designed to give the policy process back to the will of the people is the recall— a process whereby citizens can vote an officeholder out of office before the next regularly scheduled election. Petitions are circulated, and if enough signatures are collected, a special election date is set. The politician in office is ordinarily automatically listed on the ballot but goes back to private life if he or she gets fewer votes than another candidate.

Recall elections are rare. Generally, even if people become dissatisfied with elected officials, they simply bear with the situation until the next election. Very few recall efforts have been successful in the states that allow them. The voters in California, however, shocked the nation in the fall of 2003 when they recalled Democrat Gray Davis, only the second governor ever to be recalled. In his place, they selected Austrian-born, Republican, film actor, and former bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger. The man who once ruled the movie box office stepped to
Recall: Process whereby voters can remove from office an elected official before the next regularly scheduled election.

EXAMPLE: California Governor Gray Davis was recalled in 2003 by the voters and replaced by actor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The Future of the Ballot Initiatives

To many people, initiatives, referendums, and recall elections represent democracy at its best—average citizens proposing changes in government, working to build support, and allowing the majority of the community to decide its fate. As the Christian Science Monitor editorialized, “Such grassroots efforts can help reenergize voters and preserve an outlet for direct democracy if entrenched interests control the legislature. Research shows that when there’s an initiative on the ballot, voter turnout increases 3 to 7 percent.”14 Polls also suggest that roughly two-thirds of Americans believe that they should have some say in policy matters.15

However, direct democracy can be problematic. The framers of our political system were rather fearful of such a process, which is why ballot initiatives are permitted only at the state and local levels and not at the federal level. Even more significant, many critics suggest that the initiative process has changed and no longer represents “democracy in action.” That is, many critics point to the high rate of success for well-funded initiatives—initiatives that are orchestrated by highly professional campaign consulting firms. In addition, quite often groups and individuals from one state will contribute lavishly to initiative campaigns in other states. This has led some to worry that the “grassroots” aspect of the referenda process has been lost in recent years.

Ballot Initiatives

14.4 Outline the ballot initiative process, and explain why it has become controversial in recent years.

PRACTICE QUIZ: UNDERSTAND AND APPLY

1. In order to have a question or proposed law listed on a ballot advocates must gather a required number of valid voter signatures. Then, on election day, citizens can vote for or against the measure. This process is a
   a. voter initiative.   b. referendum.   c. straw poll.   d. recall.

2. A process that asks citizens on election day to reaffirm or reject an existing law is a
   a. voter initiative.   b. referendum.   c. straw poll.   d. recall.

3. A process whereby citizens can vote an office holder out of office before the next regularly scheduled election is a
   a. voter initiative.   b. referendum.   c. straw poll.   d. recall.

ANALYZE

1. Do you think the capacity of average citizens to engage in policy development has increased in recent years because of the Internet and other forms of “new media”?

2. Does it worry you that well-funded ballot initiatives seem to be more successful than poorly funded efforts? Could it be that well-funded measures are simply more popular?

IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG

a. A California law banning gay marriage
b. A Nebraska law ending affirmative action hiring
c. A federal law allowing medical marijuana
d. An Arizona law banning the hiring of illegal immigrants
e. A Maryland law allowing video lottery
The Role of Money in Elections

14.5 Assess the critical role that money plays in the election process.
(pages 464–471)

In the early days of the Republic, a common practice was to “treat” voters. George Washington, for example, was said to have purchased a quart of rum, wine, beer, and hard cider for every voter in the district when he ran for the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1751 (there were only 391 voters). In 1795, one would-be Delaware office holder roasted a steer and half a dozen sheep for his friends, and another candidate gave a “fish feast.” Four decades later, Ferdinand Bayard, a Frenchman traveling in the United States, noticed that “candidates offer drunkenness openly to anyone who is willing to give them his vote.”

Another common means of spending campaign money during the nineteenth century was to purchase advertisements in newspapers and, more often, to actually purchase a newspaper completely. Some of the most heated campaigns of the century were conducted through “battling newspapers.” It has been noted that “even Abraham Lincoln secretly purchased a small newspaper in Illinois in 1860.”

As technology changed throughout the twentieth century, so did the cost of elections. By the late 1960s, money had become critical for four main reasons:

1. **Decline of Party Organizations.** Political parties went into decline (Chapter 15, pages 504–505). Given that party organizations were primarily responsible for connecting with voters, candidates needed new ways of reaching out. Many of these new means were extremely costly.

2. **More Voters Up for Grabs.** In 1790, there were fewer than 4 million Americans, almost a quarter of them slaves. In 1900, there were 75 million Americans, and in 1960, some 180 million. Today, the U.S. population is over 300 million. Reaching such a huge number of voters requires enormous amounts of money.

3. **Television.** In the early 1950s, only a small percentage of homes boasted a television set; by the 1960s, TV was nearly universal. Television changed the way political campaigns were run. And buying advertising time requires huge sums of money.

4. **Campaign Consultants.** Professional campaign consulting burst onto the scene in the 1960s, bringing such sophisticated techniques as direct mail and survey research. These methods proved effective, but they came with a hefty price tag.

One estimate is that in 1952, a presidential election year, all campaigns for political office, from president to dogcatcher, added up to $140 million. By 2008, the equivalent figure had swelled to an estimated $5.3 billion. In the 1960s, it was common for a successful House candidate to spend less than $100,000, but by 2008, the average cost of winning a seat in the House of Representatives topped $1.4 million. An “expensive” U.S. Senate race in the 1960s was still under half a million dollars; in 2008, the average Senate race cost nearly $9 million.

With all that money, you might think races would be more competitive than in the past. In fact, in 2008, 94 percent of House incumbents were reelected, and 83 percent of Senate incumbents were sent back to office. The fundraising figures are staggering, as are the reelection rates (see Figure 14.6).

**The Rage for Reform**

Efforts to control the flow of money in elections date from the Progressive Era, but these measures were largely symbolic. Real reform came in the early 1970s, when members of Congress began to worry about being thrown out of office by a wealthy candidate—perhaps a political novice—who could simply outspend them. The **Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)** was signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1971. Three years later, after the **Watergate** scandal revealed a staggering level of corruption in presidential campaigns and led to the resignation of President Nixon, a series of amendments made the law even more restrictive. In brief, the legislation limited how

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**FIGURE 14.6 • Campaign Expenditures**

This figure suggests that the cost of elections has grown dramatically, even when inflation is factored in. _What do you think is at the heart of rising elections costs? Does this suggest a serious flaw in the process or a sign of a robust exchange of ideas?_
much money candidates could spend, how much an individual or group could give, and how much political parties might contribute. It also established voluntary public financing of presidential elections. Presidential candidates who choose to use this system are limited in the amount they can raise and spend.

Shortly after the amendments took effect, James Buckley, a Conservative Party senator from New York, along with a group of politicians from both ends of the political spectrum, challenged the constitutionality of the law. Buckley argued that spending money was akin to free speech and that limiting it would abridge First Amendment protections. The case of *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) was the most significant election-centered court decision in American history. For the most part, the Supreme Court sided with Buckley by striking down provisions of the law that put limits on overall spending, on spending by the candidates, and on spending by independent groups. However, the justices upheld the public funding of presidential elections, so long as it is voluntary, and surprisingly, the Court allowed limits on how much an individual or a group might give to a candidate.

**Political Action Committees**

Another spinoff of FECA and *Buckley* has been the proliferation of political action committees (PACs). Earlier acts of Congress had barred labor unions and corporations from giving money to federal candidates. The idea of PACs was thought up in the 1940s to get around these restrictions. In PACs, none of the monies used to support a candidate came directly from the union or corporation but instead from these groups’ independent political units. Because FECA stipulates limits on how much candidates might raise from an individual, politicians were forced to solicit help from a broad range of sources. The contribution limit for PACs was originally five times higher than for individuals, so the number of groups exploded: In 1974, there were roughly 600 PACs, but by 2008, more than 4,600 were giving out contributions (see Figure 14.7).

Political action committees give money to candidates because the interest group that backs them wants a say in public policy. Businesses, for example, want policies that help them make a profit; environmentalists want policies that help protect the natural world; and labor seeks policies that help working men and women. But do these groups, through their PACs, “buy” policies with their contributions? This is a hotly debated issue. The Center for Responsive Politics is a nonpartisan organization that tracks the flow of money in elections and the development of public policy. Its Web site (http://www.opensecrets.org) gives detailed information on who gives and who receives campaign money.

The organization’s goal is to demonstrate that money may very well “buy” policies.

Precisely what PACs buy with their contribution is unclear, however, and political scientists have been unable to settle the matter. What is clear is that the public perceives a problem. An often-heard remark is that we have “the best Congress money can buy!” Numerous public opinion polls confirm that regardless of what actually happens between contributors and public officials, average Americans regard the money flowing from PACs to candidates as a threat to the democratic process.

**The Incumbent Fundraising Advantage**

Candidates vying for office solicit funds from many sources: individuals (friends, spouses, associates, activists), political parties, PACs, and—believe it or not—other candidates, as shown in Figure 14.8. The important differences between the three types of candidates is underscored in Table 14.1 as well as
Incumbent Advantage: The various factors that favor officeholders running for reelection over their challengers.

EXAMPLE: Those in office seem to be able to raise much more money for their reelection campaigns than can their challengers.

FIGURE 14.7 Number of Registered Political Action Committees, 1974–2010
This figure shows a dramatic increase in the number of political action committees. In 2010, there were roughly 4,829 PACs. —What explains this increase, and what effect do you think this change will have on our electoral system?

FIGURE 14.8 Contributions to Candidates
There are several factors behind the incumbent advantage, and the ability to raise a great deal more money than their challengers—depicted in the figure—is at the center. —But if this is true, what can be done about it? Why would ideological groups be a bit of an exception?

Term Limits
Many reforms have been suggested to reduce the incumbent advantage. One proposal is term limits. If we are worried
about an unfair advantage given to politicians already in office, why not create more open-seat contests? Limiting legislative terms would guarantee turnover—a stream of new faces, energy, and ideas in the legislature. Representatives should know the concerns of average citizens, and what better way of ensuring that than by forcing entrenched legislators to step aside after a fixed period and make way for fresh blood? Opponents of term limits argue that the legislative process is complex, and it takes time to become familiar with the process. Term limits remove experienced legislators and replace them with inexperienced ones. Moreover, term limits deny voters a choice—the chance to reelect a legislator who they think may actually be doing a good job.

By the early 1990s, roughly half the states had adopted term limits for state legislators and candidates for federal office. Public opinion polls suggested that a majority of Americans favored these new restrictions, but many legal scholars wondered whether the states had the constitutional power to limit the terms of U.S. House and Senate members. The issue came to a head in the Supreme Court case of *U.S. Term Limits, Inc. v. Thornton* (1995). In a 5–4 decision, the Court majority stated that “allowing individual States to craft their own qualifications for Congress would . . . erode the structure envisioned by the Framers, a structure that was designed, in the words of the Preamble to our Constitution, to form a ‘more perfect Union.’” With that decision, attempts to limit the terms of members of Congress through legislative acts ended; a constitutional amendment remains the only course of action.

Reforming the Reforms: BCRA

While the FECA restrictions limited the amounts individuals and groups could contribute to a candidate, the law put no restrictions on giving money to a political party. To many Americans, this loophole, which allowed individuals and groups to give unlimited sums of money to political parties that could then be filtered down to particular candidates, had become little more than a scam. “An illness that has plagued previous elections,” wrote one observer, “has developed into an epidemic.”

By 2000, many Americans had once again come to the conclusion that the campaign finance system was out of whack. One survey found that 75 percent agreed (39 percent “strongly”) that “our present system of government is democratic in name only. In fact, special interests run things.”

Another poll, conducted in 2001, found that 80 percent of Americans felt that politicians often “did special favors for...
Clearly, the reforms of the early 1970s had done little to halt the flow of big money into elections and, if anything, had made matters worse by seeming to limit money. The public was ripe for change, but reform measures stalled in the legislature. With much effort from Republican Senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Russ Feingold, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) was passed and signed into law by President George W. Bush in February 2002.

The law was sweeping: It outlawed unlimited contributions to the national political organizations and barred group-sponsored advertisements 30 days before primary elections and 60 days before general elections. Yet the law also raised the contribution limits for individuals (see Table 14.2), and left open the ability for wealthy individuals to donate soft money*, virtually unlimited sums of money, to state and local party organizations. The ban on soft money did not apply to political action committees, which were still free to raise unlimited cash.

In 2003, the law was upheld by the Supreme Court in the case McConnell v. Federal Election Commission. In a 5–4 decision, the Court affirmed the law’s most important elements. It was, according to a *New York Times* account, a “stunning victory for political reform.”

The Rise of 527 Groups

An important by-product of the reforms was the growing number of groups not aligned with a political party but quite interested in certain policies. These groups have been named 527 Organizations* (after Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code, which regulates their practices). They are allowed to raise unlimited sums of money. Most 527s are advocacy groups that try to influence the outcome of elections through voter mobilization efforts and television advertisements that praise or criticize a candidate’s record. A great deal of the funds now flowing to 527s previously went to the parties in the form of soft money.

Two prominent examples of 527s in the 2004 election were the Swift Boat Veterans and POWs for Truth, and MoveOn.org. The Swift Boat Veterans were set up with the intention of portraying Democratic candidate John Kerry’s past military service in a negative light. MoveOn.org, by contrast, was created by a group of Americans who were dissatisfied with George W. Bush. As one observer noted, “Although BCRA cracked down on soft money spending by the political parties, it did nothing to constrain spending by outside groups.”

Indeed, one estimate is that 527 groups spent some $527 million on television ads alone in 2004.

Four years later, Democratic-leaning 527s, such as AFSCME Special, Service Employees International Union Political Action Fund, and EMILY’s List were much more influential. In the 2008 election, Democratic-oriented 527s held a three-to-one financial advantage over Republican-oriented groups. Combined, the top five 527 groups in the 2008 election spent nearly $100 million.

Are 527s the latest loophole in campaign finance law? Or are they simply a way for Americans to support candidates and to speak out during elections? The future of 527 organizations remains unclear. The Federal Election Commission moved forward with rules regulating independent groups in 2007, but most observers agree that there remains enough leeway in the law for 527s to be key players for years to come.

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**SIGNIFICANCE:**

- Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA): Federal law passed in 2002 that outlawed soft-money contributions to party organizations.
- Soft Money: Funds contributed through a loophole in federal campaign finance regulations that allowed individuals and groups to give unlimited sums of money to political parties.
Money in the 2008 Presidential Election

To say that the 2008 presidential election shattered fundraising records would be a vast understatement. In 1996, some $450 million was spent—a figure that jumped to $650 million four years later. By 2004, this amount had climbed to $720 million. In January of 2007, however, Federal Election Commission Chairman Michael Toner estimated that the 2008 race would be a “$1-billion election.” He added, “The 2008 will be the longest and most expensive presidential election in American history. Candidates are going to have to raise $100 million by the end of 2007 to be a serious candidate.”

Because the public funding system created after Watergate provides just $150 million to candidates for both the primary and general elections, Toner and many others have suggested the system may be headed for extinction. Candidates can “opt-out” of the system if they prefer, and in the 2008 race, most of the major contenders rejected public financing.

Figure 14.10 lists the spending of 2008 presidential candidates in both the major party primaries and the general election. Barack Obama’s dramatic advantage is immediately apparent. Obama, unlike John McCain, decided against taking federal campaign funds. Obama’s fundraising success was surprising for two reasons. First, Republican candidates have nearly always outraised Democratic candidates. Second, also unlike the past, a

### TABLE 14.2 Contribution Limits for 2009–2010

This table lays out the restrictions on giving that have been established by a variety of election reforms. Critics of such reforms often point out the “loopholes” that exist in the reformed system. —Looking at this table, what types of giving do you think a critic of reform would characterize as a loophole?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TO EACH CANDIDATE OR CANDIDATE COMMITTEE PER ELECTION</th>
<th>TO NATIONAL PARTY COMMITTEE PER CALENDAR YEAR</th>
<th>TO STATE, DISTRICT AND LOCAL PARTY COMMITTEE PER CALENDAR YEAR</th>
<th>TO ANY OTHER POLITICAL COMMITTEE PER CALENDAR YEAR</th>
<th>SPECIAL LIMITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual may give</td>
<td>$2,400*</td>
<td>$30,400*</td>
<td>$10,000 (combined limit)</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$115,500* overall biennial limit: • $45,600* to all candidates • $69,900* to all PACs and parties²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National party committee may give</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$42,600* to Senate candidate per campaign³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State, district, and local party committee may give</td>
<td>$5,000 (combined limit)</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC (multicandidate)¹ may give</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$5,000 (combined limit)</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC (not multicandidate) may give</td>
<td>$2,400*</td>
<td>$30,400* (combined limit)</td>
<td>$10,000 (combined limit)</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorized campaign committee may give</td>
<td>$2,000⁵</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No limit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These contribution limits are indexed for inflation.
1 A contribution earmarked for a candidate through a political committee counts against the original contributor’s limit for that candidate. In certain circumstances, the contribution may also count against the contributor’s limit to the PACs.
2 No more than $45,600 of this amount may be contributed to state and local party committees and PACs.
3 This limit is shared by the national committee and the national Senate campaign committee.
4 A multicandidate committee is a political committee with more than 50 contributors which has been registered for at least 6 months and with the exception of state party committees, has made contributions to 5 or more candidates for federal office.
5 A federal candidate’s authorized committee(s) may contribute no more than $2,000 per election to another federal candidate’s authorized committee(s).

The vast majority of Obama’s funds came from small donations. In fact, roughly half of Obama’s money was raised over the Internet, and it came in donations of less than $200.

Why did so much money flood into the 2008 election? There are several explanations. The frontloading of the primary calendar (discussed in Chapter 15 pages 516–517) put a premium on early fundraising; in order to compete in 30 states by the middle of February, candidates needed cash. It was the first open-seat presidential contest in generations, and there was a great deal of excitement. Hot-button issues, such as the state of the economy and the war in Iraq, pushed folks to write checks, and several of the leading candidates, including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, were quite astute at raising funds. Senator Clinton, for example, harnessed the popularity of her husband Bill at many fundraising events, and Barack Obama’s team skillfully used the Internet to raise record-breaking sums. Surely the prolonged nomination process had something to do with the shattered records, and it likely put an end to the public financing system—where presidential candidates agree to take public money in exchange for accepting spending limits.

Still another reason for the unprecedented sums in 2008 was the broadening of contribution sources. In the past, a small number of wealthy individuals tended to provide the lion’s share of campaign funds. Because of changes in campaign finance laws that eliminated massive soft-money contributions, and because of the growing use of the Internet to raise money, the number of citizens giving money to candidates has grown.

The Citizens United Bombshell

The most recent chapter in the story of money in American elections was a decision handed down by the Supreme Court in January 2010. The case was Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission, and it dealt with a provision of the BCRA that outlawed explicit campaigning by nonpartisan groups within 30 days of a general election and 60 days prior to a primary election. Citizens United, a conservative nonprofit corporation, produced a 90-minute documentary called Hillary: The Movie, which was highly critical of the New York Senator. They were anxious to distribute it throughout the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008, even though Clinton was running in a series of primaries and caucuses for the Democratic presidential nomination. Because they were barred from doing so, and because they thought this was a violation of their First Amendment rights, the group took the issue to the federal courts.

The Supreme Court focused its deliberations on the broad issue of the constitutionality of limits on spending by corporations and unions (established a half century before and upheld in several prior cases). In a 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that unions and corporations were entitled to spend money from their general treasuries (without the use of PACs) on federal elections, although they could not give money directly to candidates. The decision reverberated across the political system. What would this mean? One commentator, writing for the National Review Online, suggested, “The ruling represents a tremendous victory for free speech . . . . The ruling in Citizens United is a straightforward application of basic First Amendment principles.” But others feared that the decision would set loose a flood of money and lead to greater corruption. The New York Times editorialized, “With a single, disastrous 5-to-4 ruling, the Supreme Court has thrust politics back to the robber-baron era of the 19th century.”

While accurate figures are somewhat elusive, early campaign finance data from the 2010 election suggest that a flood of money did, in fact, materialize. Some estimates place the overall spending in the 2010 midterm election at over $3.2 billion, with more than one-half of that coming from outside groups. This is roughly double the amount spent by outside groups in 2008 and in 2006. Republican candidates netted the most from these groups in 2010, but the opposite was true in 2008.
The Role of Money in Elections

14.5 Assess the critical role that money plays in the election process.

PRACTICE QUIZ: UNDERSTAND AND APPLY

1. One reason for the steep rise in campaign spending in this country is that
   a. campaigns are now federally subsidized to “even the playing field” for all candidates.
   b. blogs and mass e-mails are enormously expensive.
   c. people are more inclined to vote for a candidate if they know he or she has spent a lot of money campaigning.
   d. there are more potential voters to reach each year, making expensive broadcast advertising a higher priority.

2. Advocacy groups that try to influence the outcome of elections through voter mobilization efforts as well as television advertisements that praise or criticize a candidate’s record are known as
   a. PACs.
   b. 527 groups.
   c. third parties.
   d. pundits.

3. According to the Supreme Court, in the case of *Citizens United v. FEC*, corporations and unions should have the same constitutional protections as individuals, and therefore be able to spend money on campaigns from their general treasury.
   a. true
   b. false

ANALYZE

1. There are essentially two ways of seeing money in elections: as a corrupting influence or as a form of political speech. What’s your opinion on this important issue? Explain your answer.

2. Short of term limits, which the courts have said are unconstitutional for congressional seats, is there anything that can be done to reduce the incumbent advantage?

IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG

a. Consultants
b. Television
c. Independent voters
d. Polling
e. Strong political parties

The Ironies of Money and Politics

In every election, a few candidates run for office on a shoestring budget, overcome the odds, and are sent into public life. We relish such stories: Maybe it is not money that wins elections, we think, but ideas and character. Unfortunately, elections of this sort are few and far between. Money plays a powerful role in today’s electoral system; as Jesse Unruh, a retired California politician, once accurately but cynically said, “Money is the mother’s milk of politics.” If we put an optimistic spin on the situation, perhaps we might conclude that some candidates raise more money than others because they are more popular and thus more likely to win on election day. We might applaud the flow of money into campaigns, seeing it as a form of free speech.

However, many Americans are troubled by the role played by big money in elections. They believe that it gives some candidates an unfair advantage and spills the election into the policymaking process. It is one of the many ironies of an open political process: Individuals and interest groups are encouraged to back political candidates vigorously, but in doing so, their efforts distort the playing field. The freedom to participate creates a system with limited participation.

**Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission** (2010): A Supreme Court case that reversed decades of precedent by declaring unconstitutional laws that ban unions and corporations from using general operating funds on elections.
Campaigning Online

14.6 Analyze the ways the Internet has changed the election process.
(pages 472–477)

Constantly looking for a competitive edge, campaign strategists often push the limits of new technology. Already a key tool in contemporary campaigns, use of the Internet is evolving at a rapid pace.

Online Communications

The Internet and the applications built to take advantage of this network may constitute the most powerful communications tool known to humans. Through this medium, individuals can communicate with millions, and groups canorganically emerge and facilitate complicated networks within the membership. The nature of these communications can take the shape of nearly all known media—text, video, graphics, audio, and so on. This potential alone makes the Internet a campaign manager’s dream tool, yet figuring out how to use this resource effectively has been difficult.

WEB SITES One of the most important parts of Internet-based campaigning is a candidate’s Web site. First appearing as presidential campaign communications tools in 1996, Web sites have steadily increased in strategic importance since then. In the early iterations of campaign Web design, very few resources were devoted to developing and sustaining sites. In fact, it was common for candidates to ask a tech-savvy relative, friend, or college student to design and maintain the entire site. In a little more than a decade, the volunteer Web master has now been supplanted by professional Web design firms that specialize in online campaigning.

Running for president presents significant communications challenges, and a candidate’s Web site has become essential to helping meet these challenges. It establishes 24/7 information resources for nearly all constituents of the campaign. Perspective voters browse for information in trying to make up their minds about the candidate; volunteers download critical information to help organize their work; news reporters find critical information and photos needed to help file candidate-related stories, and potential campaign contributors find answers to last-minute questions before they submit donations online. In addition to maintaining communications with core constituents, campaign Web sites typically provide a comprehensive calendar, endorsement-gathering tools, position papers on policies, tools for collecting public comments, assistance with organizing blogs, an online campaign store for purchasing paraphernalia, contact information for all campaign offices, and much more.

ONLINE NEWS Trends suggest voters are moving away from traditional newspapers to online news sources for campaign information. This started in the mid-1990s, when independent Web sites emerged to present campaign information. At the time, these sites were novel, because they were not developed and supported by traditional news providers, such as CNN, ABC, the CBC, and so forth. One of the most prominent early endeavors in this area was Web White and Blue (WWB), which was an online knowledge network that at one point had 17 charter sites at various colleges and universities contributing information to the network. It was similar in concept to a wiki environment, where independent writers submit content to a community or shared area. However, as general Internet usage swelled in the United States to numbers that make the Web a common resource for many Americans, traditional news sources began repurposing their content to online sites. As CNN.com, MSNBC.com, CBSNews.com, and more began to establish their online resources, they soon overwhelmed the nonprofit and independent Web sites with their content and general information capacity.

The presence of comprehensive and immediate online news sources and the development of news aggregating engines (e.g., Google News) caused a shift in the electorate. This was identified as early as 2000. In conducting a survey of WWB users, one scholar found that they had in general “substituted the Internet for newspapers as one of [their] two main election news sources.”34 He found that television news was the most common news source, followed by Internet news consumption. This supports more general findings from Pew’s ongoing study, the Internet and American Life Project.35 They find that U.S. citizens who note the Internet as a “main source of political campaign news” rose 18 percent between 2000 and 2004. The rise was 31 percent for U.S. citizens who cite the Internet as a source for “any election news.” As noted in Table 14.3, the percentage of Americans who use the Internet for news about presidential campaigns has grown dramatically in the past few years. Table 14.4 (page 473) notes interesting generational differences.

BLOGGING An online information source that has attracted growing voter interest in recent elections is the blog—a Web site with information that is maintained by individuals (bloggers) and used to express opinions on particular topics (e.g., the 2008 campaign). Blogs are often referred to as online journals or online diaries. They usually contain personal observations and tend to be opinionated—often quite visceral. Many people like reading blogs about candidates, because they feel they can get “honest” opinions. According to a recent Technorati Report,36 the blogosphere (the collective network of all blogs) has been growing at a very rapid pace. The first blogs were reported in 1997, and it took a few years for them to become common enough to register any kind of campaign effect. In August 2004, for example, there were approximately 3 million blogs...
mentioned in the blogosphere over 3,000 times on busy days and slightly under 1,000 times on light days. During the fall of 2007, her name was mentioned, on average, approximately 1,400 times per day in the blogosphere.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a powerful connection has emerged between what happens on sites and blogs and the “established” media. Very often, campaign topics are raised first on blogs and later in mainstream media. Mark Halperin and John Harris write about this in their book *The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008*. Discussing the power of the Drudge Report (http://www.drudgereport.com), a popular political site and blog, they note: “Drudge’s power derives only in part from the colossal number of people who visit his site... His power comes from his ability to shape the perceptions of other news media—Old and New alike.”37 It is likely that blogs will continue to impact politics in the near future (see Figure 14.11).

---

### TABLE 14.3 Where the Public Learns About the Presidential Campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGULARLY LEARN SOMETHING FROM ...</th>
<th>CAMPAIGN YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local TV news</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable news networks</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightly network news</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily newspaper</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV news magazines</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning TV shows</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Public Radio</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk radio</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable political talk</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday political TV</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public TV shows</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News magazines</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late-night talk shows</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious radio</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-SPAN</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy TV shows</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou Dobbs Tonight</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TABLE 14.4 What Fields Do You Think Blogging Will Have the Greatest Impact on in the Next 10 Years?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>100</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td></td>
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<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green/Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrity/Gossip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion/Spirituality</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
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<td>Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


online. One year later, the number had grown to 12 million. In August 2006, Technorati indexed approximately 50 million blogs. In August 2007 (only 10 years after they began), the Web hosted 94 million blogs.

While all 94 million blogs did not participate in the 2008 election, a substantial number did. For example, TechPresident (http://www.techpresident.com) reports that within a one-month period (September 15–October 14, 2007), Hillary Clinton was mentioned in the blogosphere over 3,000 times on busy days and slightly under 1,000 times on light days. During the fall of 2007, her name was mentioned, on average, approximately 1,400 times per day in the blogosphere.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a powerful connection has emerged between what happens on sites and blogs and the “established” media. Very often, campaign topics are raised first on blogs and later in mainstream media. Mark Halperin and John Harris write about this in their book *The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008*. Discussing the power of the Drudge Report (http://www.drudgereport.com), a popular political site and blog, they note: “Drudge’s power derives only in part from the colossal number of people who visit his site... His power comes from his ability to shape the perceptions of other news media—Old and New alike.”37 It is likely that blogs will continue to impact politics in the near future (see Figure 14.11).

**FIGURE 14.11 Will Blogs Transform Elections?**

Blogs have had a significant impact on politics that is likely to continue. We might have predicted this, given the vibrant, participatory nature of recent elections. Americans like to speak their minds about candidates and policies, and blogs provide an outlet for doing this. —To what extent has the “blogosphere” contributed to the shrill, uncivil tone of elections in recent years?

“Looking forward, what fields do you think blogging will have the greatest impact on in the next 10 years?”

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Online Fundraising

The Internet has been used as a fundraising tool since the development of e-commerce technology in the mid- to late 1990s. John McCain surprised many by raising a modest sum in his 2000 bid for the White House, but it did not become a significant and widely recognized medium for collecting large sums until 2004, when Howard Dean’s presidential campaign and groups like MoveOn.org demonstrated that the medium was capable of generating vast amounts of money.

The success of online fundraising in 2004 startled many observers, but as the 2008 election drew near, such systems were commonplace. All the presidential campaign sites displayed a prominent button encouraging visitors to make an online contribution. And while online contributions remain subject to all the campaign contribution guidelines enforced by the Federal Elections Commission (individuals can only contribute up to $2,400 per election, contributors must disclose basic contact information, and so on), they opened up new strategic territory for the ongoing fundraising needs of the 2008 presidential campaigns. The pace of collecting funds also stunned many observers. When the media reported that Hillary Clinton had won the Pennsylvania Democratic Primary, her online fundraising site started to hum. In the next 24 hours, she raised over $3 million, a staggering sum in such a short period given that it came from relatively small donations.

In the Massachusetts special election for the U.S. Senate in 2010, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Republican

---

**TABLE 14.4 | What Online Sources Do People Use?**

This table indicates the percentage of each group of online news users who use each source on a typical day. —Do you think we will continue to see dramatic differences between age groups in the coming years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Description</th>
<th>AGES 18–29</th>
<th>AGES 30–49</th>
<th>AGES 50+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A portal Web site like GoogleNews, AOL, or Topix that gathers news from many</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Web site of a TV news organization such as CNN, Fox, or CBS</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Web site that specializes in a particular topic like health, politics, or</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Web site of a national or local newspaper</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An individual or organization, other than a journalist or news organization, that</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you follow on a social networking site like Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Web site of an international news organization such as the BBC or The Guardian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or a foreign language news site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Web site that offers a mix of news and commentary, such as the Drudge Report of</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huffington Post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Web site of a radio news organization such as NPR</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A news podcast from an organization such as NPR or the New York Times</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A news organization or an individual journalist you follow on a social networking</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site like Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Web site of an individual blogger (who does not work for a major news</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A news Web site such as Digg or News Trust where users rank stories</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter updates from an individual or organization other than a journalist or</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>news organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter updates from a journalist or news organization</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scott Brown began the race as a fundraising underdog. But as the race grew tighter, online contributions from across the nation flooded his coffers. In the end, Brown raised over $12 million online, with over 157,000 individual donations. This was likely the largest online fundraising total for a nonpresidential candidate in U.S. history.38 What is also stunning about this total is that some 97 percent came from individual contributions and only 2 percent from political action committees.39

Social Networks, Handhelds, and Twitter

In the 2008 campaign, online social networks emerged for the first time as a component of campaign strategies. Increasingly, candidates are leveraging social networks as a means to communicate with prospective voters. Online social networks have been around for a while; however, they have not been used in presidential campaign politics until recently. Online social networks bring individuals together in an environment with the explicit goal of connecting these individuals to form groups around common interests. Online tools used in this environment include chat, basic Web design, messaging, video and photo posting, blogging and vlogging (video blogging), discussion forums, file sharing, and more. The explosion of these sites has been impressive. For example, in 2007 there were some 34 million active users on Facebook. By 2010 that figure had reached 400 million.

All of the 2008 presidential candidates had MySpace and Facebook accounts, with varying numbers of registered/networked “friends” (see Table 14.5). Through their accounts, candidates posted information similar to the content posted at their official campaign Web sites, but the collection of registered friends coming to the social network account was visible to the entire community, giving each individual a chance to meet and communicate with others. A few candidates established Second Life accounts with fully developed avatars (the virtual candidate in Second Life) and virtual campaign headquarters. Of the three social networking services, Second Life appears to be the service that received the least amount of attention from the candidates.

A growing number of Americans, especially young Americans, have also turned smart phones. This change has enabled millions of voters to access news, share stories and video clips, and to donate money while on the move. In many respects, the traditional approach to reaching voters in the evening while at home has been transformed. Twitter, a social networking and microblogging service that debuted in the 2008 presidential election and was used extensively by the Obama campaign, allows candidates and voters to send and read campaign tweets any time of the day. Almost all serious candidates for Congress and statewide offices, as well as a number of local office candidates set up Twitter accounts for the 2010 campaign. As you might expect, there is a rather significant generational difference. According to one study, some 33 percent of those under 30 tweet, but just 4 percent of those over 65 use this service.40

Online Video/YouTube

As you know from Chapter 11 (page 371), television exploded onto the presidential campaign scene with the televised Kennedy–Nixon debates in 1960. In 2008, YouTube demonstrated a similar explosion with the publication of video streaming from nearly all campaigns. The mention of YouTube as a prominent component of the 2008 campaign is in itself rather remarkable, given that the online video-sharing Web site started in early 2005. As such, the 2008 presidential election was the first presidential election ever to be held with YouTube in existence—with some calling it the “YouTube Election.”

While the 2008 campaign was the first presidential campaign to be influenced by YouTube, its impact was quite clear in the historic 2006 midterm elections. Several Republican seats were in jeopardy, with Democrats experiencing a general upswing in popularity in response to Bush’s falling polling numbers. One of the races that Republicans lost in 2006 was a Virginia Senate seat. George Allen was running as the Republican candidate and had a very strong lead over Jim Webb, the Democratic candidate, well into the election. This lead held steady until one day on the campaign trail, when Allen called a rival campaign’s worker “macaca” during a campaign event. The individual was Indian American, and the apparent racial slur was caught on video. The clip was immediately posted to YouTube, receiving many views and sparking a larger national debate on the network news. Webb ended up closing the gap and ultimately defeated Allen in the 2006 election, and many

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**TABLE 14.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE</th>
<th>BARACK OBAMA</th>
<th>JOHN MCCAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>2,379,102 friends</td>
<td>620,359 friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MySpace</td>
<td>833,161 friends</td>
<td>217,811 friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>112,474 followers</td>
<td>4,603 followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>1,792 videos</td>
<td>329 videos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

attribute his success to the “macaca” incident. In previous elections, Allen’s comment might have been missed, but in 2006, YouTube offered a video publication channel that altered the course of the campaign.

As 2008 strategies began to emerge early in the presidential election process, it became clear that candidates and their consultants were thinking formally about YouTube and how it might help the campaign process. A few individuals officially announced their candidacy on YouTube. This strategy was generally successful in 2008, because it heightened an otherwise dull story. For example, when Barack Obama announced he was running for president, the announcement in itself was newsworthy, as was the fact that he released his announcement over YouTube. The two newsworthy elements combined gave the story better legs and more exposure.

Beyond official candidacy announcements, several candidates routinely produced content for YouTube. For example, nearly all 2008 political ads were repurposed online. They were typically played to a specific television market via regional airwaves and then made available to everyone on YouTube. This allowed the campaigns to extend their reach, but it also gave journalists an easier way to monitor political advertisements.

One of the most extraordinary uses of YouTube came about on July 23, 2007. On that date, CNN sponsored a presidential debate in South Carolina in which questions were presented by “average” citizens over YouTube. The ground-up nature of the event, with citizens posing presidential questions, gave the debate a greater sense of democracy than many (maybe all) prior presidential debates.

The use of YouTube on the campaign trail underscores an important relationship that we have discussed already—the relationship between online information and the establishment media. As more and more citizens post videos of campaign events on YouTube, we learn new information about candidates, and often unflattering information. In the spring of 2008, as Barack Obama seemed to be sailing to the nomination, posts of Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the senator’s pastor, began appearing on YouTube. These clips, containing portions of fiery, controversial sermons, were played and replayed by millions of Americans. What was Obama’s precise relationship with this man? Did he share these controversial thoughts? The “Wright controversy” became Obama’s greatest primary election obstacle as traditional news programs and newspapers also carried the story.

Senator George Allen of Virginia talks with the media in September 2006 about allegations that he used a racial slur while on the football team at the University of Virginia. The issue of Allen’s racial attitudes was raised after a video showing his use of a derogatory term was posted on YouTube. —Have YouTube and similar sites changed the nature of campaigns in America? If so, is this change for the better? Why or why not?
Campaigning Online

14.6 Analyze the ways the Internet has changed the election process.

PRACTICE QUIZ: UNDERSTAND AND APPLY

1. According to recent research, television news is the most common news source, followed by Internet news consumption.
   a. true  
   b. false  

2. Web sites with information maintained by individuals and used in a manner to express opinions on particular topics are known as
   a. chat rooms.  
   b. Internet cafes.  
   c. punditocracies.  
   d. blogs.  

3. Not only are more people giving money to political campaigns than in the past, but they are also doing so over the Internet.
   a. true  
   b. false  

4. The online development that seeks to bring individuals together with the explicit goal of forming groups around common interests using chat, basic Web design, messaging, and video and photo posting is known as
   a. a blog.  
   b. a social network.  
   c. a cybernetwork.  
   d. a superblog.  

ANALYZE

1. What advantages does the Internet bring to political campaigning? Are there any downsides?

2. What does the emphasis on the Internet do to traditional campaign techniques—and to the older audiences that traditional techniques appeal to?

IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG

a. Direct mail  
   b. Blogs  
   c. Social networks  
   d. Web sites  
   e. Video sharing sites
Individual Participation in Elections

14.7 Evaluate electoral engagement in America, particularly as it relates to young citizens. (pages 478–483)

There are many ways average citizens can shape the course of government. The same is true of participation in the electoral process—there are many ways for citizens to become involved in campaigns and elections. Some people believe that voting is the foundation of all electoral participation. However, many citizens are politically active but do not vote, and for some Americans, not voting is either a statement of contentment or a form of political protest. Also, even if there is some sort of “ladder of electoral participation,” voting is probably not the bottom rung. Simply talking about different candidates with friends and family, for example, or reading news stories or watching television programs about election happenings are types of electoral participation. Any action that is broadly linked to the conduct or outcome of an election can be considered electoral behavior. We might add to the list helping with a campaign; donating money; joining an election-focused interest group; attending election-centered rallies, dinners, or meetings; placing a yard sign in front of your house or a bumper sticker on your car; or even wearing a button. The point is that citizens can become involved in the election process in many ways. Voting is just one of them.

Another way to think about forms of political participation is to consider the difference between individual and collective participation. Individual participation occurs when a citizen engages in activity aimed at changing public policy without interacting with other citizens. Examples include voting, giving money to a candidate or party, watching political news on television or online, or writing to a candidate or an office holder. Collective participation occurs when a citizen takes action in collaboration with other like-minded citizens. Examples would be attending a rally, discussing politics with friends and family, working at a party or candidate’s headquarters, blogging about a political topic, or attending the local meeting of a political party (see Figure 14.12). Although both types of participation can be seen in the American setting, individual participation clearly occurs more often. Yet, many of the most significant changes in public policy, such as worker rights, civil rights, and environmental legislation, stemmed from collective action.

Voter Turnout

In thinking about levels of political participation in any democratic system, we often look at turnout—an easily quantifiable number based on the number of citizens who actually vote on election day divided by the total number of citizens who are legally qualified to vote in that election. If 1 million residents are allowed to vote but only 600,000 do so, turnout is 0.6, or 60 percent. The number of citizens or residents of a nation does not factor into the turnout ratio; rather, it is the number of those who are legally eligible to vote.

There was little interest in federal elections during the early days of our republic. Election turnout for presidential elections, measured by the percentage of eligible (male) voters, reached only into the teens until 1800, when it jumped to 31 percent. After what Andrew Jackson called the “corrupt bargain” in the election of 1824, political participation shot up dramatically: In 1828, some 57 percent of eligible voters went to the polls, and by the 1860s, the voting rate had leveled off very high, hovering around 80 percent for the rest of the nineteenth century.

In the early twentieth century, however, election day turnouts began to slip. There were a number of likely causes. For one, during this period there was a flood of immigration, causing a population boom in urban areas. Although these new citizens would soon be assimilated into the political process, many of them did not immediately vote. Second, registration laws, residency requirements, and other restrictions during the Progressive Era made it harder for people in the lower socioeconomic class to participate in elections. Finally, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920 granted women the right to vote, but at first, they were slow to exercise that right. The percentage of women voting improved with...
time, however, pushing the overall turnout up by the middle of the twentieth century.

When Vice President Richard M. Nixon and an upstart senator from Massachusetts by the name of John F. Kennedy squared off in the presidential election in 1960, some 61 percent of the electorate turned out to vote (see Figure 14.13). In the decades since, that figure has dropped more or less steadily. From 1980 until 2000, only about half of eligible voters turned out for presidential elections. Even worse is the participation in midterm congressional elections—the elections between presidential contest years: 2002, 2006, 2010, and so forth.

However, in 2004, just over 55 percent of Americans came out to vote for either John Kerry, the Democrat, or George W. Bush, the incumbent Republican. Some observers speculate that the increased turnout was a reaction to the disputed outcome of the 2000 election, in which Al Gore got more popular votes but fewer Electoral College votes than George W. Bush. Many Americans were motivated either to defeat the president or to keep him in the Oval Office. Other analysts point to the highly competitive nature of the 2004 election and to the important issues of the day, not the least of which was terrorism in the wake of 9/11 and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Still others think that both campaign teams concentrated on get-out-the-vote efforts as never before. But whatever the reason, the 2004 election suggested that Americans might once again be paying greater attention to elections.

The upward trend continued in 2008, with roughly 62 percent of eligible voters coming to the polls. This figure surpassed all presidential turnout levels since the 1960s. Voters in nearly every demographic group flocked to the polls, but the greatest increases in turnout came from less affluent citizens, young voters, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Geographically, the largest increases in turnout were seen in the South and Rocky Mountain states. Dramatic candidates, a lengthy primary campaign, crosscutting issues, and massive get-out-the-vote efforts proved to be a “perfect storm” for voter mobilization in 2008. By the 2010 midterm election, however, overall turnout numbers returned to traditional levels—roughly 40 percent. For many subgroups such as young citizens, Hispanic Americans, and African Americans, there was actually modest decline from the previous 2006 midterm election. For example, some 23 percent of voters under 30 turned out in 2006, but in 2010, that figure had dropped to just 20 percent.

Explaining Modest Turnout

One of the great questions of our day is the cause—or causes—of modest electoral participation. Why was turnout generally higher 50 years ago, even though more Americans attend college, registration barriers have been all but eliminated, and the civil rights movement opened the door to far greater involvement by African Americans and other previously oppressed groups of citizens? With so many positive changes, why would levels of electoral participation be so modest?

There is no clear answer, but theories abound (see Figure 14.14). One possibility is attitudinal change. Increased cynicism, distrust, and alienation are often identified as the root of the problem. Perhaps Americans are less sure about their own role in changing the course of government. Survey data seem to support the claim that negative attitudes about politics have increased over the decades. For instance, in the mid-1950s, about 75 percent of Americans might have been described as trusting their government to “do what is right all or at least most of the time.” This number plummeted to just over 20 percent by the early 1990s but has since moved back up just a bit, to roughly the 47-percent range. About 22 percent of Americans in the 1950s thought “quite a few” politicians were crooked. That number jumped to 50 percent in the mid-1990s and today stands at about 35 percent. Many other indicators suggest that Americans are less confident about government and politics than in previous times. However, can we link these attitudes to lower levels of electoral participation? Most scholars agree that these changes have had an impact on levels of participation, although they debate the degree of their importance.

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**FIGURE 14.13 Participation in Presidential Elections**

Most Americans believe we are one of the most democratic nations on earth. While that may be true in some respects, our participation in electoral politics is less than stellar.

—What might explain the various fluctuations in turnout? Do you think the 2004 and 2008 elections marked a long-term reversal of the downward trend, or were they simply an exception?
Inconvenient polling place

FIGURE 14.14 ▪ Why People Don’t Vote

One way to read this figure is to consider the reasons for not voting, and explore changes that might help. For instance, if “too busy” explains about 20 percent of why people do not vote, perhaps we should consider making election day a national holiday. Another way to explore the data is with a keen eye toward differences in demographic groups. —Why would over twice as many respondents with less than a high school degree use “illness and disability” as an excuse for not voting, compared to those with some college? Why are there so many registration problems for Hispanic Americans?

Reasons Given for Not Voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too busy</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or emergency</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t like candidates</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of town</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration problems</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgot</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient polling place</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation problem</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad weather</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Closely related to this perspective is what we might call the lifestyle-change theory. According to this hypothesis, life today is simply busier than in the past and offers more distractions. According to the sociologist Robert Putnam, author of the widely discussed book Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, “I don’t have enough time” and “I’m too busy” are the most often heard excuses for social disengagement. 42 Today, the majority of families have two wage earners, a massive shift from the 1950s, when relatively few women worked outside the home. “And since there are only 24 hours in the day,” Putnam concludes, “something had to give,” and “it seems plausible that the cutbacks also affected community involvement.” 43 The same sort of argument is often made with respect to the shrinking number of Americans’ nonworking hours. This argument suggests that we are also more distracted by television, new technologies, and social network sites, and we have to spend too many hours commuting long distances or putting in extra hours at our jobs to be heavily involved in politics.

Putnam and others are quick to caution against overstating this argument, however. Although it may be true that more women are spending more time at a workplace these women also have more opportunity to vote because on election day they are already pulled out of the home by work, and we know that gainfully employed women are actually more involved in civic life than “stay-at-home” women. 44

Although changes in attitudes and lifestyles may account for part of the decline, many analysts suggest that the deepest root lies elsewhere. A strong possibility would be changes in local party politics. As you will see in Chapter 15, pages 504–505, local–level party organizations—which historically pushed citizens to the polls on election day—seem to be withering. A generation ago, many party workers, nearly always volunteers, kept track of which known party members had voted and which had not yet showed up at the polling place. By dinner time on election day, those who had delayed voting would get a telephone call or even a visit from one of these workers and be “gently” reminded to vote. Political scientists have tested the relationship between local party vitality and levels of turnout, and the data are convincing: Turnout is much higher in communities that still have strong local parties. 45 But fewer and fewer communities have such organizations.

The nature of campaigns is also cited as a reason for voter alienation. Campaigns, especially for the presidency, have become much longer, conceivably leading to voter burnout. Negative campaigning might add to the burnout. The first scholarly take on the issue seemed to confirm this theory, but on closer inspection, things seem more complicated. Although some studies have found that negative ads do turn voters off, roughly an equal number of other studies have found that turnout actually increases in these negatively charged races. 46 One impressive study suggests that some voters—the less partisan ones—are turned off when the campaign gets nasty but that negative campaigning activates the most partisan voters. 47 Still another line of research suggests that the effects of negative ads depend on the voter’s local political culture. 48 A citizen in Provo, Utah, might respond differently to attack ads than, say, a voter in Brooklyn, New York.

Finally, there is the role of the news media. Some social scientists have suggested that the recent turn toward what one scholar has called “attack journalism” or media “feeding frenzies” has repelled voters. 49 In the past, a politician’s personal transgressions were kept out of the news. Journalists and average citizens alike drew a line between a politician’s public and private lives. Probably due to the highly competitive nature of the news business, anything that draws the public’s attention seems fair game to the media today.

**Voting and Demographic Characteristics**

Another closely related question is why certain groups of Americans participate less than others. Here, too, scholarly findings are inconclusive. One perspective centers on “commu-
nity connectedness.” This theory states that the more connected you are to your community, the more likely you are to vote. Demographic data suggest that poor people, for example, move more often than the affluent do, and they are certainly much less likely to own a home (which creates a strong connection to one’s community). Every time you change your permanent address, of course, you also need to change your voter registration. Not surprisingly, the level of political participation for these highly mobile people is quite low. This perspective might explain why younger Americans seem less engaged; many of them have little true connection to a particular community.

The “costs” of political participation seem to decline as people’s level of formal education increases, as noted in Figure 14.15. The Census Bureau reported that 33.7 percent of registered voters without a high school diploma voted in 2004, as opposed to 78 percent of those with a college degree and 84 percent of those with a graduate degree. Not only does awareness of the mechanics of voting rise with formal education, so do the benefits of voting. People’s sense of civic duty seems to build through education. As one pair of political behavior scholars have noted, “Length of education is one of the best predictors of an individual’s likelihood of voting.”

Young Voters

Finally, there is the issue of age. Age has always been an excellent predictor of who participates in elections. Simply stated, young Americans have always voted at lower rates than older Americans have. This group has less completed education, is less affluent, and has much less likelihood of owning a home—all factors that seem related to participation. Younger citizens are also much more mobile, and they often get tripped up by residency requirements and voter registration issues. Yet survey data also suggest that young Americans are eager to contribute to the betterment of society; their rate of volunteering is comparable to the rates of other age groups, as can be seen in Figure 14.16. The irony, of course, is that this willingness to become involved does not always seem to spread to political involvement.

Things might be changing, however. Much to the surprise of scholars, pundits, and older Americans, youth voting made a dramatic turnaround in 2004, and 2008 continued the trend. As you can see in Table 14.6, voter turnout in 2004 increased among all Americans by about 4 percent, but the increase was greatest among the youngest voters. Whereas just 32 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds voted in 2000, some 42 percent did in 2004. This represented an 11 percent increase—double the rate of increase in any other age group. In 2008, young voters flocked to the polls; about 49 percent of those under 25 came out to vote for either John McCain or Barack Obama—truly historic data. Some 66 percent cast their vote for the senator from Illinois.

The robust youth turnout in the 2008 general election reflects a trend noticed in the presidential nomination process. In the winter and spring of 2008, record levels of young citizens participated in the primaries and caucuses. In Iowa, the first caucus of the season, turnout for those under 30 tripled from the 2004 and 2000 levels. Turnout in the primary elections held in Texas, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, and several other states also tripled.

Why were so many more young voters flocking to the polls? There are a number of possible explanations. For one thing, the earlier decline in youth participation was so startling that many organizations and programs, such as MTV’s Rock the Vote and Generation Engage were initiated to bring young people back to the polls. As it became apparent that the 2004 presidential election would be close, operatives on both sides sought out new groups of supporters, and young voters were a prime group targeted by both parties’ campaigns.

Several new elections pathway organizations also tried bringing voters to the polls, including Americans Coming To—
together and MoveOn.org. Possibly the intensity of the campaign and the weight of the issues pulled young Americans into the electoral process. Issues such as the state of the economy, climate change, the war in Iraq, gay marriage, the future of Social Security, and health care reform caught young voters’ attention. “Young Americans turned out to vote at remarkable rates in the primaries. This reflects their deep concern about the critical issues at stake and the impact of this election on the country’s future,” notes one scholar.51

Unfortunately, there is growing evidence that young voters might once again be tuning out. Those under 30 made up 22 percent of the electorate in New Jersey in 2008—a percentage that dropped to just 8 percent in the 2009 gubernatorial election. In Virginia, it went from 21 percent in 2008, to 10 percent in 2009. As for the Massachusetts special election we noted at the start of the chapter, turnout for those over 30 was a healthy 56 percent, but for those under 30 it was a mere 15 percent. One columnist, writing for Newsweek, put it this way: “[T]here are probably more Yankees fans in Massachusetts than here are young people who voted in the Massachusetts Senate special election.”52 The article went on to note 2010 polling data indicating a 19 percentage point nation-wide drop in the number of young people interested in politics in just one year. Indeed, turnout for those under 30 dropped to just 20 percent in 2010, some three points less than the previous 2006 midterm election.

FIGURE 14.16 Volunteerism by Age Group

Many older Americans believe that youngsters are apathetic, indifferent, and lazy. Yet, as this figure illustrates this is not true. —Are you surprised by these figures? Why do you suppose young citizens are so ready to become engaged in numerous community programs and organizations but at the same time refrain from politics? What can be done to convince younger generations to join the political fray?

| Percentage of Turnout by Age Groups in 2000, 2004, and 2008 Elections |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                             | 18–24                      | 25–44                      | 45–64                      | 65 AND OVER  |
| 2000                        | 32.3                       | 49.8                       | 64.1                       | 67.6                       | 55.3                       | 51.3                       |
| 2004                        | 41.9                       | 52.2                       | 66.6                       | 68.9                       | 55.3                       | 55.3                       |
| 2008                        | 48.5                       | 59.9                       | 69.5                       | 70.1                       | 62                         | 62                         |


SHORTLY after the 2004 election, Adrian and Devin Talbott, Justin Rockefeller, and Cate Edwards—each in their twenties and children of affluent, political families—decided to do something to get their generation involved in the political process. “The root of the problem,” they argued, “lies in a self-perpetuating cycle. Young people do not have much money, so politicians don’t seek their contributions. In turn, young people often feel ignored and don’t see politics as relevant to their lives.” Their organization, Generation Engage, or “GenGage,” moved in a rather unique direction.

Their first step was to hire full-time local activists, who they call “Outreach Coordinators,” and to have these young men and women set up satellite outreach programs. Second, the coordinators set up nonpartisan meetings on the topics most relevant to specific communities. Next, GenGage used technology, such as iChat videoconferencing tools, to hold massive meetings. “In this way,” they argued, “GenGage connects disparate groups of members in communities across the country to lead interactive conversations with local, national, and international leaders.”

GenGage iChats were held with, among others, former President Bill Clinton; General Colin Powell; former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich; Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer; Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi; Coretta Scott King; and former senators Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and Chuck Hagel. Bill Clinton seemed to hit the nail on the head during his GenGage iChat: “Whether you are Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative, think government should or should not be more involved, you can’t go on thinking, ‘This is the way things are. There is nothing I can do.’ It’s not true,” Clinton said. “You cannot for the rest of your life look in the mirror and say, ‘I regret this, this, and this.’ I wish America were this, this, and this. You know they’re giving you a vehicle to do it. That’s why I’m honored to be here to support the cause.”
Historically, young Americans have been much less engaged in politics than have older Americans, and some recent evidence suggests this is still true. Why do you think so many young Americans are content to sit on the sidelines?

In 2010, GenGage merged their efforts with Mobilize.org, a similar initiative formed in 2002. A host of innovative programs are being developed, with young citizens at the center. For more information on this novel organization, visit their Web site at http://mobilize.org/index.php.


Hispanic American Voters

At several places in this book we have mentioned the importance of Hispanic Americans as the fastest growing demographic group in the nation. But how has this growth shaped electoral politics? Thus far, it would seem that Democrats have benefited most. In 2008, for instance, some 67 percent of Hispanic Americans supported Barack Obama, and 73 percent supported Democratic House candidates. Even in 2010—a very tough year for Democrats overall—65 percent of Hispanic-American voters supported Democratic House candidates.

But when we shift from voter preference to turnout, a somewhat different picture emerges. Hispanic Americans, like other minority groups in the United States, vote at significantly lower levels than do non-Hispanic white Americans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 49 percent of this group turned out in 2008, compared to 66 percent of non-Hispanic white voters and 65 percent of African Americans. Many are puzzled by this turnout gap, and both Democrats and Republicans are in search of ways to mobilize this growing demographic group in support of their candidates.

For Democrats, the key will be to help Hispanic Americans better appreciate the value of political engagement. For Republicans, the challenge will be to convince Hispanic Americans that their interests are best expressed through GOP policy positions. Both parties, however, understand the importance of creating vigorous outreach initiatives to mobilize Hispanic American voters in the coming years.

Individual Participation in Elections

Evaluate electoral engagement in America, particularly as it relates to young citizens.

**PRACTICE QUIZ: UNDERSTAND AND APPLY**

1. Attending a rally, discussing politics with friends and family, working at a party or candidate’s headquarters, or attending the local meeting of a political party are all examples of
   a. individual participation.
   b. collective participation.
   c. positive campaigning.
   d. cohort campaigning.

2. Voter turnout was much stronger 50 years ago than it has been in modern times.
   a. true
   b. false

3. Voter turnout declined in the 2008 election, probably due to the unpopularity of both candidates.
   a. true
   b. false

**ANALYZE**

1. Many young Americans seem attracted to community service but less interested in political action. Can service substitute for politics? Are there problems with a generation removed from politics?

2. Make a case for individual participation being more useful than collective participation, and then argue the opposite case.

**IDENTIFY THE CONCEPT THAT DOESN’T BELONG**

a. Voting
b. Reading about politics
c. Attending rallies
d. Talking about politics with friends
e. Having faith in the electoral process
Conclusion

Americans put a great deal of faith in the election process, and over the past two centuries, many changes have opened the system to more involvement. But at the same time, it seems that only a modest number are willing to get involved. What difference does it make if many Americans do not seem interested in politics and that Americans on the whole turn out to vote less often than citizens in other democracies? Is this really something to worry about?

One way to answer such questions is to take a practical point of view. What policy difference would it make if nonvoters got into the act? Would the government head in a different direction if turnout were higher? Early studies suggested that on the whole, the policy preferences of nonvoters essentially paralleled those of voters. There would be little policy change if we had full election turnout. More recent studies suggest, however, that who votes does matter. The low turnout in the 1994 election allowed the Republicans to capture control of both houses of Congress and helped bring George W. Bush to the White House in 2000. If more young voters had turned out in the Massachusetts special election in 2010, it is possible that Martha Coakley would have defeated Scott Brown. In each of these cases, and untold more, the outcome of public policy would have been much different with higher voter turnout.

Another way to answer such questions is to examine how you define democracy. For example, perhaps precise levels of participation are unimportant; so long as enough citizens are involved to make the process competitive, full participation is inconsequential. The people who refrain from involvement in politics are also likely to be the least well informed. Perhaps we do not want these people involved in the process; is an uninformed vote really preferable to none at all? Along similar lines, some people speculate that less informed citizens (the nonvoters) are more prone to radical policy shifts, so their absence at the polls actually adds a degree of stability to public policy. The conservative columnist George Will, in a piece titled “In Defense of Nonvoting,” argues that good government—not the right to vote—is the fundamental human right. He suggests that high voting rates in Germany’s Weimar Republic (1919–1933) enabled the Nazis to take power in 1933. Declining turnout in America, Will asserts, is no cause for worry. This perspective is often called the elite democratic model. It insists that so long as fairness and political opportunity are guaranteed, the system is healthy.

The popular democratic model, by contrast, suggests that the character of any political system is not simply the outcome of public policy but also the process by which it is reached. This model puts a premium on electoral involvement. When this occurs, citizens develop an affinity for the system, because they are convinced that they have a stake in whatever policy results from political decisions. Put a bit differently, this theory says that systems of government designed to reflect the will of the people will do so better, and in the long run will be more prosperous and stable, if average citizens join the electoral process. Echoing this sentiment, the liberal political scientist and journalist E. J. Dionne, in his book Why Americans Hate Politics, has written that “a nation that hates politics will not long thrive as a democracy.” Which of these well-known commentators, Will or Dionne, in your opinion comes closer to the truth?
How do aspects of the electoral process shape the democratic nature of our political system?

**Political Parties**

**Benefit:** Political parties winnow the number of candidates, organize campaign events, and offer voters a convenient way to evaluate candidate policy stands.

**Limitation:** Many candidates and voters do not fit neatly into the major parties; the nomination process in particular has come under intense scrutiny in recent years.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

What if political parties somehow vanished? What impact would this have on elections in the United States?

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**Campaign Spending**

**Benefit:** Campaign money enables candidates to get their message out to voters. Studies have shown that voters know more about candidates when hefty resources are spent in a race.

**Limitation:** The very strong relationship between candidate spending and the chances of winning an election creates an unlevel playing field; the system loses legitimacy in the eyes of some voters.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

What if the reason some candidates raise more money than others is simply because they are more popular? How would critics of campaign spending respond to this argument?

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**Voting Requirements**

**Benefit:** Voting requirements have slowly been eased to broaden the electoral process and the democratic character of our government.

**Limitation:** Certain barriers to voting, such as residency and registration requirements, remain and limit the involvement of certain groups of voters, including young Americans.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

What if Congress made same-day voter registration the law in every state? How might this affect voter turnout?

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**The Media**

**Benefit:** Media coverage aids voters by giving them more information and helping them sort through candidate data.

**Limitation:** Studies confirm that the media tend to give incumbents (those already in office) more coverage than challengers.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

How much influence do the media have over the electoral process? Should the media be restricted in any way in their coverage of candidates for public office? Why or why not?

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**Voter Attitudes**

**Benefit:** Many citizens take elections seriously, study candidate qualifications, and vote in all elections.

**Limitation:** Overall, voter turnout in the United States is modest, and many mistakenly assume elections are the only option for influencing public policy, and so do nothing else.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

Can not voting be interpreted as a sign of contentment, rather than just a sign of apathy? Why or why not?

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The framers of our system of government were ambivalent about popular elections. In the end, most agreed that the democratic character of the system would be enhanced through election of at least some offices. Yet, a host of unforeseen factors have transformed this basic democratic practice. And the elections process is vastly different from what it was twenty years, much less two hundred years, ago.

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*Should the federal government take greater control of and responsibility for the elections process? Or are state and local governments best able to ensure the participation of the voting eligible population? Would the elections process benefit from greater limits on the length of campaigns or additional public funding of campaigns? Why or why not?*
**Elections and Democratic Theory**

**14.1 Evaluate the theoretical strengths and limitations of elections.**

(pages 448–451)

Americans put a great deal of faith in elections, believing that “the right to vote” is at the core of any democratic society. From a theoretical vantage, there seems to be several reasons to make such a claim. For example, elections can reflect the public’s attitude about broad policy questions, and because they are widely accepted as a legitimate means for selecting leaders, elections can create stability in a democratic system. But there are also some downsides that most people rarely consider, such as the widespread assumption that voting is the only means for voicing your concerns.

**KEY TERMS**

Republican Form of Government 448
Plato (427–347 B.C.) 448
Landslide Election 448
Legitimacy 449
Civic Participation 450
Episodic Participation 450

**CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS**

1. Which of the theoretical justifications for elections makes the most sense to you, and which of the arguments against elections seems most persuasive?
2. This section notes that elections push episodic and individual participation. But what’s so wrong with keeping your politics private and engaging in politics only sporadically? Also, do you think the Internet has changed this?

**INTERNET RESOURCES**

For information on electoral systems in other countries, visit the following sites: http://www.electionguide.org/ and http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/election.htm

**ADDITIONAL READING**


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**Presidential Selection**

**14.2 Outline the process by which we select the president of the United States.**

(pages 452–457)

Many forces shape the conduct of presidential elections, but none is more significant than the Electoral College. This complex, rather odd institution was yet another compromise at the Constitutional Convention, a means to moderate the “passions of the public” and to allow smaller states a greater say in the selection of the president. Today the Electoral College structures how and where campaigns are conducted and, occasionally, as in the 2000 presidential election, who takes up residence at the White House.

**KEY TERMS**

Electoral College 452
Twelfth Amendment (1804) 454
Unit Rule 454
Swing States 454

**CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS**

1. How, exactly, does the Electoral College benefit small states? Was this a fair compromise at the Constitutional Convention? Has the system worked as the framers intended?
2. What are some advantages of the Electoral College? Along similar lines, what would be some downsides to a direct presidential election? How can the Electoral College be made meaningless without amending the Constitution?

**INTERNET RESOURCES**

To learn more about the Electoral College, see the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration at http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/index.html

**ADDITIONAL READING**

Expansion of the Electorate and Other Legal Issues

14.3 Describe the legal challenges that have broadened the democratic character of elections in America.

(pages 458–461)

On one level, elections take place outside the boundaries of government. As noted in Chapter 1, elections are “processes,” not institutions. In fact, some have thought it a bit strange that the framers of our system made little mention of how elections might be conducted. Yet there have been numerous constitutional and legal changes that have redefined the nature and practice of elections in America. Nearly all of these changes, such as the Fifteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-sixth Amendments, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, have broadened the number of citizens legally entitled to participate in the process.

KEY TERMS
- Fourteenth Amendment 458
- Fifteenth Amendment 458
- Nineteenth Amendment 458
- Twenty-Fourth Amendment 458
- Twenty-Sixth Amendment 458
- Voting Rights Act of 1965 459
- Residency and Registration Laws 460
- Motor Voter Law 460
- Help America Vote Act 461

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS
1. What, if any, additional legal changes do you think would enhance the democratic character of elections in America?
2. Some have speculated that younger Americans, perhaps beginning at age 16, should be given the right to vote. One proposal is to give them a partial vote, sort of like a “learner’s permit.” Does this make sense to you?

INTERNET RESOURCES
For information on a range of campaign-related issues, see the Federal Election Commission Web site at http://www.fec.gov

ADDITIONAL READING

Ballot Initiatives

14.4 Outline the ballot initiative process, and explain why it has become controversial in recent years.

(pages 462–463)

When most of us think about elections, candidate selection comes to mind. But in about half the states, voters are allowed to cast ballots on policy questions. To many, ballot initiatives, where voters cast ballots for or against a policy proposal, are a good way to insert the “will of the people” into government. Others suggest these campaigns are about the manipulation of the public, and they are too often decided by financial resources.

KEY TERMS
- Ballot Initiative 462
- Recall 462

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS
1. Why do you suppose the framers chose not to allow ballot initiatives for federal policy?
2. Some have suggested that the public should not be given the chance to vote on policy questions, because they are uninformed and lack relevant information. Has the Internet changed things in this area? That is, given the volume of information on the Internet, would you agree that average citizens should have greater opportunities to assess policy measures?

INTERNET RESOURCES
For information on ballot initiatives including referendums and recalls, see the Ballot Initiative Institute’s Web site at http://www.iandrinstitute.org

ADDITIONAL READING
The Role of Money in Elections

14.5 Assess the critical role that money plays in the election process.
(pages 464–471)

Many Americans believe money distorts the election process. A number of laws have been passed to help level the playing field, most recently the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. Others argue that giving and collecting money is a form of political action. An important Supreme Court decision in the case of Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission seemed to buttress this position; the court found limits on corporate and union campaign spending unconstitutional.

KEY TERMS

Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) 464
Watergate 464
Buckley v. Valeo (1976) 465
Incumbent Advantage 466
Term Limits 466
Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) 468
Soft Money 468
527 Organizations 468
Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission 470

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What is your take on the central issue in Buckley v. Valeo (1976)? Is money a form of political speech, protected under the First Amendment? If so, would you extend these protections to corporations and labor unions, as the Supreme Court recently did?

2. One way to get around First Amendment protections is to create a voluntary public financing system for all elections. Candidates who chose to take public funds would be barred from additional fundraising. Does this make good sense? Are there downsides to this plan?

INTERNET RESOURCES

For extensive information on campaign finance, see the Center for Responsive Politics at http://www.opensecrets.org

ADDITIONAL READING


Campaigning Online

14.6 Analyze the ways the Internet has changed the election process.
(pages 472–477)

The history of campaigns in America is one of transformation and continual adjustment. The Internet is in many ways altering the way candidates organize, raise funds, and reach voters. Websites, blogs, video sharing sites, social networking sites, tweets, and much else have become key elements in most campaigns. This has created a sea change in the way average citizens collect information and participate in the electoral process.

KEY TERM

Blog 472

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Do you think there is any relationship between new media technologies and what some believe to be the decline in civility in politics?

2. Do you think the Internet helps level the playing field between affluent and poorly funded candidates, or is cash still “the mother’s milk of politics”?

INTERNET RESOURCES

There are numerous political sites, as you know. For a link to many of the most prominent political blogs, see http://technorati.com/blogs/directory/politics/

ADDITIONAL READING


Individual Participation in Elections

14.7 Evaluate electoral engagement in America, particularly as it relates to young citizens.
(pages 478–483)

There are many ways that citizens can become involved in the election process—from voting or attending a rally to sending in a check to a candidate or talking about issues and candidates with friends. For many of us, elections are an important part of our civic lives. To others, electoral participation does not seem to be worth their time and effort. The 2004 and 2008 elections suggest growing interest in electoral politics, but many agree that we still have a way to go in terms of participation. This might be especially true for young citizens. There are signs that this generation has discovered the power and potential of political action, but there are countertrends that suggest they may once again retreat to the sidelines.

KEY TERMS
Electoral Behavior 478
Turnout 478
Elite Democratic Model 484
Popular Democratic Model 484

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS
1. Most likely some of your friends and family do not participate in electoral politics. What do you think is at the root of their inactivity and/or indifference?
2. Data presented in this section suggest young Americans are paying greater attention to electoral politics. Why do you suppose this is true? What is different now than a few decades ago? Will it last?

INTERNET RESOURCES
For information on levels of political participation in America, see the Center for the Study of the American Electorate Web page at http://www.american.edu/ia/cdem/csa/

For information on youth political engagement, see the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at http://www.civicyouth.org

ADDITIONAL READING

Chapter Review  Test Your Knowledge

1. Elections serve as more than a measure of current opinions and preferences; they serve as a civics refresher course.
   a. true
   b. false

2. Ironically, while fewer Americans have participated in elections in recent decades,
   a. more people believe they are participating.
   b. more people now have the opportunity to participate.
   c. more people run for office.
   d. more Americans vote from overseas.

3. Since 1824, how often have presidents been elected with a plurality—not a majority—of popular votes?
   a. twice
   b. seven times
   c. sixteen times
   d. twenty-six times

4. Regarding elections, the first priority of the framers of the Constitution was
   a. governmental stability.
   b. creating a truly democratic system.
   c. making sure that everyone had equal access to the ballot box and public office.
   d. making sure public policy represented the majority opinion of eligible voters.

5. A major reason for the creation of the Electoral College was to ensure that
   a. the will of the majority of voters in each state would be accurately represented in presidential elections.
   b. men of the best character and intellect would be deciding who the next president and vice president would be.
   c. each state in the new Union would have equal representation in the election process.
   d. England would not interfere with the election process.

6. Regarding the role of political parties in elections, the framers of the Constitution reasoned that electors would rise above partisan preferences and vote for the candidates who would best serve the nation.
   a. true
   b. false

7. According to the Supreme Court case of Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission
   a. bans on corporate spending on elections are unconstitutional.
   b. contributing money to a candidate is akin to free speech.
   c. unions should be able to spend money on political campaigns.
   d. All of the above.

8. What federal law was enacted in 2002, following the vote-count chaos in the 2000 presidential election?
   a. the 2002 Voting Rights Act
   b. the Motor Voter Act
   c. the Help America Vote Act
   d. the Butterfly Ballot Abolition Act

9. Now used widely in presidential campaigns, MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube are all examples of
   a. Internet blogs.
   b. chat rooms.
   c. pundit Web sites.
   d. online social networks.

10. What prompted popular interest in the motor voter law?
    a. the desire to help democracy and the domestic automobile industry
    b. the desire to confine the pool of registered voters to responsible adults
    c. the desire to counteract state registration laws that may have had the effect of unfairly limiting people’s ability to register to vote
    d. the desire to reinforce state registration laws requiring registered voters to be residents of their state and citizens in good legal standing

11. More and more voters—especially young voters—resort to online news sources as opposed to traditional sources such as television and newspapers.
    a. true
    b. false

12. Which of the following is NOT a reason for the massive increase in the cost of political campaigns?
    a. an increased dependence on television advertising
    b. an increase in the number of voters that campaign advertising must reach
    c. campaign consultants
    d. the abolition of poll taxes

13. The unit rule and partisan slates of electors make it likely that the most popular candidate (the highest vote getter) will become the president but do not guarantee it.
    a. true
    b. false

14. What did the Federal Election Campaign Act and its subsequent amendments prohibit?
    a. limitless campaign spending on the part of candidates, and limitless contributions from individuals, groups, or political parties
    b. warrantless wiretapping
    c. making individual campaign contributions tax deductible
    d. the use of soft money in campaigns

15. One result of the Supreme Court case Buckley v. Valeo (1976) was to lift most restrictions from the activities of political parties.
    a. true
    b. false
16. The outcome of the 2010 Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* was that
   a. labor unions were allowed to spend money from their general funds to help elect candidates.
   b. corporations were allowed to spend money from their general funds to help elect candidates.
   c. candidates were barred from taking money from citizens groups.
   d. both a and b

17. Incumbency is a powerful advantage in elections. In recent House elections ______% of the incumbents won. One popular argument for why this happens is that ______
   a. 65; incumbents always have more money to spend.
   b. 75; incumbents are better, more seasoned leaders.
   c. 85; incumbents have earned a greater degree of trust from most voters.
   d. 95; nearly all legislative activity is now geared toward securing reelection.

18. One explanation for the decline in voter turnout during recent decades is that people’s lifestyles have changed.
   a. true  b. false

19. What is so paradoxical about the low turnout of young voters?
   a. The average age of political candidates themselves has steadily declined.
   b. Young people keep up with the news more avidly than older voters do.
   c. Young people are more inclined than ever before to volunteer to help their community.
   d. Surveys indicate that young people are less disenenchanted with the government than older people are.

20. Unfortunately, there is some evidence that young citizens are once again tuning out elections.
   a. true  b. false

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**Exercises**

Apply what you learned in this chapter on MyPoliSciLab.

- [Read on mypoliscilab.com](http://www.mypoliscilab.com)
  - eText: Chapter 14
- [Study and Review on mypoliscilab.com](http://www.mypoliscilab.com)
  - Pre-Test
  - Post-Test
  - Chapter Exam
  - Flashcards

- [Watch on mypoliscilab.com](http://www.mypoliscilab.com)
  - Video: Dissecting Party Primaries
  - Video: Oprah Fires Up Obama Campaign
  - Video: State Primary Race
  - Video: Who Are the Superdelegates?
  - Video: Money in the 2008 Presidential Race

- [Explore on mypoliscilab.com](http://www.mypoliscilab.com)
  - Simulation: You are a Campaign Manager: Lead Obama to Battleground State Victory
  - Simulation: You are a Campaign Manager: Countdown to 270!
  - Simulation: You Are a Campaign Manager: McCain Navigates Campaign Financing
  - Simulation: You Are a Media Consultant to a Political Candidate
  - Simulation: You Are an Informed Voter Helping Your Classmates
  - Comparative: Comparing Political Campaigns
  - Comparative: Comparing Voting and Elections
  - Timeline: Close Calls in Presidential Elections
  - Timeline: Nominating Process
  - Timeline: Television and Presidential Campaigns
  - Visual Literacy: Iowa Caucuses
  - Visual Literacy: The Electoral College: Campaign Consequences and Mapping the Results