

- ▶ **Democratic Party:** favors more government support for programs, such as health care and public education
- ▶ **Republican Party:** favors less government, lower taxes, and more freedom

- ▶ **Libertarian Party:** wish to maximize human freedom and to reduce government and taxation
- ▶ **Green Party:** wants to reduce exploitation of the natural environment
- ▶ **Socialist Party:** favors more public services, public ownership of utilities and some industries
- ▶ **Communist Party:** believes capitalists exploit workers; revolution needed to achieve change



Major Parties

Other Parties

Political Parties in Florida

Impact of Political Parties

# Political Parties and Elections

Positive Effects

Negative Effects

- ▶ Encourage citizens to participate in political parties
- ▶ Help government leaders to organize support
- ▶ Act as watchdogs over the opposing party

- ▶ Divides Americans
- ▶ Places pressure on legislators



Voting

Elections

- ▶ Regulated by state governments
- ▶ Voters must register before voting

Factors in Evaluating Candidates

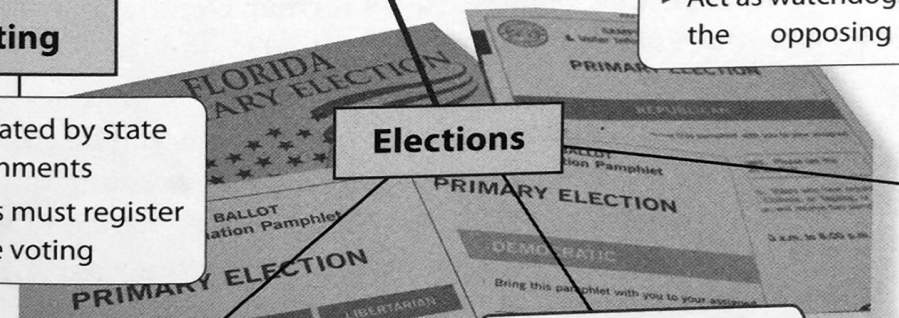
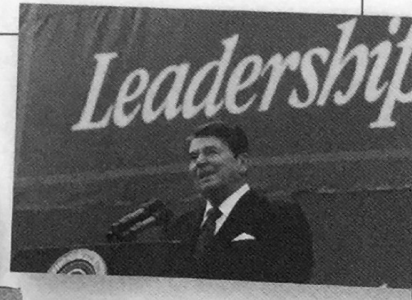
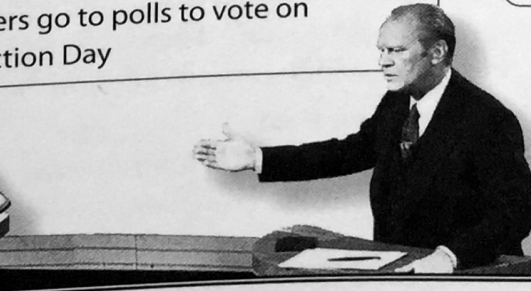
Nomination Process

Campaign for General Election

- ▶ Voters show their preferences for candidates in primary elections
- ▶ Parties hold state and national conventions

- ▶ Nominees raise funds from campaign contributions, PACs, personal savings to purchase
- ▶ Political advertising, canvas voters, hold rallies, and debate on television
- ▶ Voters go to polls to vote on Election Day

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Experience, especially in public office
- ▶ Their views on issues
- ▶ How capable they appear in debating
- ▶ How truthful their political advertisements are



# Review Cards: Political Parties and Elections

## What are Political Parties?

Political parties are groups of people who share political beliefs and work to elect their candidates to public office.

## Political Parties in Florida

- ▶ Americans have a **two-party** system.
- ▶ In Florida today, there are two major political parties: the **Democratic Party** and the **Republican Party**.
- ▶ There are also several smaller political parties: the **Socialist Party**, the **Communist Party**, the **Libertarian Party**, and the **Green Party**.
- ▶ Any group of dedicated citizens can register in Florida as a new political party.

## The Democratic Party

- ▶ The Democratic Party controlled Florida politics for almost a century—from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 until the Civil Rights Movement a century later.
- ▶ Democrats lost the Governorship when Republican Claude Kirk—a former Democrat—was elected Governor in 1966. Democrats then lost control of the Florida Senate in 1992 and the Florida House of Representatives in 1996.
- ▶ Florida Democrats favor using the power of government to provide high quality public education, affordable health care, and a growing economy. They are also concerned about accountability of government, jobs, women and families, civil rights, immigration, and protecting land and water use.
- ▶ The Democratic Party has developed statewide “caucuses,” or branches, within their party. Each caucus has specific goals as well as the more general aim of helping the Democratic Party.

## The Republican Party

- ▶ The Republican Party first arrived in Florida in 1867, during Reconstruction.
- ▶ Today, Governor Rick Scott is a Republican, and Republicans have a majority of seats in both houses of the Florida Legislature.
- ▶ Republicans stand for less government interference, more private enterprise, lower taxes, a strong foreign policy, and greater personal freedom. They believe this approach will most promote economic growth and job creation, which benefit all Americans.
- ▶ Within the Republican Party, the “**Tea Party**” is a group of conservatives who fear excessive government spending, high taxes and the growing national debt. Tea Party members attempt to cut government spending (including domestic programs) so that the national debt and taxes can be reduced.



## The Socialist Party

- ▶ **Socialism** developed in reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the horrendous social conditions it produced.
- ▶ Socialists sought to correct these injustices by having public ownership of energy, resources, transportation, housing and other basic industries, and providing free services in health and education.
- ▶ The Socialist Party of Florida was the state chapter of the Socialist Party of the United States of America. In Florida, the Socialist Party opposed American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also supported same-sex marriages and the free speech rights of minors. It ran candidates for some offices. The party became inactive in 2011.

## The Communist Party

- ▶ **Communism** was a movement that was started in Europe in the 1840s by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Communists believe that all history is the history of “class struggle” in which one social group, or “class,” always exploits another.
- ▶ The **Florida District of the Communist Party USA** opposes cuts to social services and education, and tax breaks to corporations, while it supports the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid expansion, immigration rights, and gay and lesbian (GLBT) rights.
- ▶ Communists believe that capitalism will eventually fail.

## The Libertarian Party

- ▶ The key word in **libertarianism** is “liberty.” Florida Libertarians favor less government and more personal freedom. They favor freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the free market economy, reduced taxation, reduced government spending, personal privacy, states’ rights, and the right to carry guns.
- ▶ Libertarians oppose the new “Common Core” standards, which they see as federal interference in education. They argue that “a single, national standard can only be low average at best.”

## The Green Party

- ▶ The **Green Party** was originally formed to protect the environment. Green Party members oppose the competitiveness of modern society, which they believe has led to the exploitation of both people and the environment.

## Qualifications for Public Office

- ▶ **U.S. Senator:** Must be an American citizen for 9 years and a current resident of the state represented.
- ▶ **Governor of Florida:** Must be a resident of Florida for at least 7 years.
- ▶ **Florida Senator or Florida Representative:** Must be a resident of Florida for at least 2 years and be a current resident of the district represented.

## Positive Effects of Political Parties

**Representation:** Political parties represent the views of voters.

**Participation:** Political parties offer opportunities for citizenship participation in government and politics.

**Candidates:** Political parties find and select candidates for elected offices.

**Campaigns:** Political parties manage and finance election campaigns.

**Voting:** Political campaigns encourage people to vote in elections.

**Education:** Political parties educate voters by informing them about the issues.

**Debate:** Political parties offer alternatives and encourage debate.

**Legislation:** Political parties help members of local, state and federal lawmaking bodies organize themselves into groups in behalf of a legislative program.

**Watchdog:** Political parties serve as “watchdogs” by criticizing what opposing parties are doing.

**Bridge:** Political parties serve as a bridge uniting members of the executive and legislative branches of government.

**Compromise:** Political parties encourage members to compromise their views.

## Negative Effects of Political Parties

**Division:** Political parties divide Americans.

**Bias:** Political parties present biased views of the issues.

**Pressure:** Political parties pressure legislators and other elected officials to follow their party’s program against their own beliefs.

**Distraction:** Legislators and other officials spend more time supporting their party, raising money and trying to get re-elected than they do on the work of government.

**Self-Interest:** Political parties act to win votes, rather than doing what is really best.

**Stalemate:** Divisions between competing political parties often prevent government from getting things done.

**Monopolistic:** Political parties raise large sums of money for campaigns, making it hard for independent candidates to compete.

## Voter Registration

- ▶ Only **registered** citizens can vote in an election. Voters register at the county level.
- ▶ The **National Voter Registration Act of 1993** (or “Motor Voter” law) requires state governments to offer voter registration at the same time that someone applies for or renews his or her driver’s license.
- ▶ According to the Florida Division of Elections to register to vote in Florida, a person must be a citizen of the United States, a Florida resident, 18 years old (you may preregister if you are 16 years old), not be judged to be mentally incapable, not have been convicted of a felony, and provide a valid Florida driver’s license number or Florida identification card.



## The Nomination Process

- ▶ Political parties must find suitable people to run for political office. Each party **nominates** (*names*) one candidate for each government office that is up for election.
- ▶ **Primaries:** When several individuals from the same party seek the same political office, they compete in a **primary election** to obtain their party's nomination. It is held some months before the general election. Florida has a **closed primary**. Only the registered members of a political party can vote in that party's primary election.
- ▶ **Party Conventions:** Political parties hold state and national **conventions**. National conventions are usually held every four years to nominate candidates for President and Vice President. Party conventions adopt a **party platform**—a detailed statement of the party's policies for the future.

## Political Campaigns

Party nominees campaign against each other during the final months before the general election. Candidates use various methods:

- ▶ **Political Advertisements** appear on television, radio, magazines and newspapers. These advertisements must include the candidate's name, his or her party affiliation, and who paid for the advertisement. "**Negative campaign ads**" are advertisements in which political candidates attack their opponents.
- ▶ **Direct Mail and Telephone Campaigns:** Candidates send flyers by mail, have volunteers call voters by telephone, or send recorded messages to voters.
- ▶ **Canvassing Votes:** Candidates and volunteers go house to house to talk to voters.
- ▶ **Public Relations/Reports in the Media/Political Rallies and Demonstrations**
- ▶ **Volunteers:** Unpaid volunteers host meetings, contact voters, spread the messages of their candidates, make campaign contributions, and help raise additional funds.
- ▶ **Public Debates:** These events allow voters to see the candidates face-to-face.
- ▶ **Online:** Candidates make websites in order to post detailed policy statements.

## Election Day

- ▶ On "Election Day," registered voters go to their polling place to vote in the general election. A **poll** is the place where citizens vote.
- ▶ In Florida, voters must show a current identification card with a picture and signature. Without a valid identification card, voters can vote on a "provisional ballot."
- ▶ Citizens vote in private, using either paper ballots or an electronic voting machine.
- ▶ Candidates' campaign organizations contact known supporters to make sure they vote.

## Campaign Finance

- ▶ Political campaigns are generally financed by private money.
- ▶ Presidential candidates can receive public money but then must limit their total election spending. Those who do not accept these funds have no spending limits.
- ▶ Candidates can form political committees. Corporations and labor unions cannot make contributions to candidates, but can make contributions to separate "**political action committees**" (PACs).

## Evaluating Candidates

Voters must evaluate candidates competing for the same position based on each candidate's:

- ▶ **Qualifications** : Background, education, employment, and achievements.
- ▶ **Experience** : Does the candidate have experience in this office or a similar one? Is he or she an **incumbent** (*an official already holding the same public office*)?
- ▶ **Issues**: Candidates usually release **platforms** filled with statements of where the candidate stands on major issues and accompanying campaign promises. A “**campaign promise**” is something a candidate promises to do if he or she is elected.
- ▶ **Debates**: Voters may judge a candidate in action, close up.
- ▶ **Political Ads**: A good political advertisement presents a candidate's qualifications, experience, and views on the issues, while also showing why opponents are less qualified. Political advertisements not only serve to criticize opponents, but also reveal something about the sponsor of the ad.