

# Study Outline

## Chapter 8: Elections and Campaigns

- I. Presidential versus congressional campaigns
  - A. Introduction
    1. Two phases: getting nominated and getting elected
    2. Getting nominated
      - a. Getting a name on the ballot
      - b. An individual effort (versus organizational effort in Europe)
      - c. Parties play a minor role (compared with Europe)
      - d. Parties used to play a major role
  - B. Major differences
    1. Presidential races are more competitive.
      - a. House races have lately been one-sided for Democrats.
      - b. Presidential winner rarely gets more than 55 percent of vote
      - c. Most House incumbents are reelected (more than 90 percent)
    2. Fewer people vote in congressional elections
      - a. Unless election coincides with presidential election
      - b. Gives greater importance to partisan voters (party regulars)
    3. Congressional incumbents can service their constituents.
      - a. Can take credit for governmental grants, programs, and so forth
      - b. President can't; power is not local
    4. Congressional candidates can duck responsibility.
      - a. "I didn't do it; the people in Washington did!"
      - b. President is stuck with blame
      - c. But local candidates can suffer when their leader's economic policies fail
    5. Benefit of presidential coattails has declined
      - a. Congressional elections have become largely independent
      - b. Reduces meaning (and importance) of party
  - C. Running for president
    1. Getting mentioned
      - a. Using reporters, trips, speeches, and name recognition
      - b. Sponsoring legislation, governing large state
    2. Setting aside time to run
      - a. Reagan: six years
      - b. May have to resign from office first
    3. Money
      - a. Individuals can give \$1,000, political action committees (PACs) \$5,000
      - b. Candidates must raise \$5,000 in twenty states to qualify for matching grants to pay for primary
    4. Organization
      - a. Need a large (paid) staff
      - b. Need volunteers
      - c. Need advisers on issues: position papers
    5. Strategy and themes
      - a. Incumbent versus challenger: defend or attack?
      - b. Setting the tone (positive or negative)
      - c. Developing a theme: trust, confidence, and so on
      - d. Judging the timing
      - e. Choosing a target voter: who's the audience?
  - D. Getting elected to Congress
    1. Malapportionment and gerrymandering.
    2. Establishing the size of the House
    3. Winning the primary
      - a. Ballot procedures
      - b. Developing a personal following for the "party's" nomination
      - c. Incumbent advantage
    4. Sophomore surge
      - a. Using the perks of office
      - b. Campaigning for / against Congress

5. Impact of the way we elect individuals to Congress
    - a. Legislators closely tied to local concerns
    - b. Weak party leadership
- II. Primary versus general campaigns
- A. Kinds of elections and primaries: general versus primary elections
  - B. Differences between primary and general campaigns
    1. What works in a general election may not work in a primary
      - a. Different voters, workers, and media attention
      - b. Must mobilize activists with money and motivation to win nomination
      - c. Must play to the politics of activists
    2. Iowa caucuses
      - a. Held in February of general election year
      - b. Candidates must do well
      - c. Winners tend to be "ideologically correct"
      - d. Most liberal Democrat, most conservative Republican
      - e. The caucus system: "musical chairs and fraternity pledge week"
    3. The balancing act
      - a. Being conservative (or liberal) enough to get nominated
      - b. Move to center to get elected
      - c. True nationwide in states where activists are more polarized than average voter
      - d. The "clothespin vote": neither candidate is appealing
    4. Even primary voters can be more extreme ideologically than the average voter  
Example: McGovern in 1972
  - C. Two kinds of campaign issues
    1. Position issues
    2. Valence issues
  - D. Television, debates, and direct mail
    1. Paid advertising (spots)
      - a. Has little (or a very subtle) effect on outcome: spots tend to cancel each other out
      - b. Most voters rely on many sources of information.
    2. News broadcasts (visuals)
      - a. Cost little
      - b. May have greater credibility with voters
      - c. Rely on having TV camera crew around
      - d. May be less informative than spots
    3. Debates
      - a. Usually an advantage only to the challenger
      - b. Reagan in 1980: reassured voters
      - c. Primary debates: the "dating game" in 1988
    4. Risk of slips of the tongue on visuals and debates
      - a. Ford and Poland, Carter and lust, Reagan and trees
      - b. Forces candidates to rely on stock speeches
      - c. Sell yourself, not your ideas
    5. Free television time to major presidential candidates in 1996
    6. The computer
      - a. Makes direct mail campaigns possible
      - b. Allows candidates to address specific voters
      - c. Creates importance of mailing lists
    7. The gap between running a campaign and running the government
      - a. Party leaders had to worry about reelection
      - b. Today's political consultants don't
- III. Money
- A. How important is it?
    1. "Money is the mother's milk of politics."
    2. Presidential candidates spent \$286 million in 1992; up from \$177 million in 1988
    3. Are candidates being "sold" like soap? Answer is not so obvious
  - B. The sources of campaign money
    1. Presidential primaries: part private, part public money
      - a. Federal matching funds
      - b. Only match small donors: less than \$250; \$5,000 in twenty states

- c. Gives incentive to raise money from small donors
    - d. Government also gives lump-sum grants to parties to cover conventions
  - 2. Presidential general elections: all public money
  - 3. Congressional elections: all private money
    - a. From individuals, PACs, and parties
    - b. Most from individual small donors (\$100 to \$200 a person)
    - c. \$1,000 maximum for individual donors
    - d. Benefit performances by rock stars, etc.
    - e. \$5,000 limit from PACs
    - f. But most PACs give only a few hundred dollars
    - g. Tremendous PAC advantage to incumbents: backing the winner
    - h. Challengers have to pay their own way; only one-sixth from PACs
- C. Campaign finance rules
  - 1. Watergate
    - a. Dubious and illegal money raising schemes
    - b. Democrats and Republicans benefited from unenforceable laws.
    - c. Nixon's resignation and a new campaign finance law
  - 2. Reform law
    - a. Set limit on individual donations (\$1,000 per election)
    - b. Reaffirmed ban on corporate and union donations, but allowed them to raise money through PACs
    - c. Set limit on PAC donations (\$5,000 per election to individuals, \$15,000 per year to a party)
    - d. Federal tax money made available for primaries and general election campaigns.
  - 3. Impact of the law
    - a. Increase in money spent on elections
    - b. Increase in PAC spending
    - c. Additional problems: independent expenditures and soft money
  - 4. Campaign finance reform
    - a. Reforms can have unintended consequences
    - b. Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002
      - 1. Ban on soft money
      - 2. Increase on individual contributions (to \$2,000 per candidate per election)
      - 3. Restrictions on independent expenditures
- D. Money and winning
  - 1. During peacetime, presidential elections usually decided by three things:
    - a. Political party affiliation
    - b. State of the economy
    - c. Character of candidates
  - 2. Money makes a difference in congressional races
    - a. Challenger must spend to gain recognition
    - b. Jacobson: big-spending challengers do better
    - c. Big-spending incumbents also do better
  - 3. Party, incumbency, and issues also have a role
  - 4. Advantages of incumbency
    - a. Easier to raise money
    - b. Can provide services for constituency
    - c. Can use franked mailings
    - d. Can get free publicity through legislation and such
- IV. What decides elections?
  - A. Party identification, but why don't Democrats always win?
    - 1. Democrats less wedded to their party
    - 2. GOP does better among independents
    - 3. Republicans have higher turnout
  - B. Issues, especially the economy
    - 1. V. O. Key: most voters who switch parties do so in their own interests
      - a. They know which issues affect them personally
      - b. They care strongly about emotional issues (abortion, etc.)
    - 2. Prospective voting
      - a. Know the issues and vote for the best candidate

- b. Most common among activists and special interest groups
      - c. Few voters use prospective voting because it requires information.
    - 3. Retrospective voting
      - a. Judge the incumbent's performance and vote accordingly
      - b. Have things gotten better or worse, especially economically?
      - c. Examples: presidential campaigns of 1980, 1984, 1988, and 1992
      - d. Usually helps incumbent unless economy has gotten worse
      - e. Most elections decided by retrospective votes
      - f. Midterm election: voters turn against president's party
  - C. The campaign
    - 1. Campaigns do make a difference
      - a. Reawaken voters' partisan loyalties
      - b. Let voters see how candidates handle pressure
      - c. Let voters judge candidates' characters
    - 2. Campaigns tend to emphasize themes over details
      - a. True throughout American history
      - b. What has changed is the importance of primary elections and tone of campaigns
      - c. Theme campaigns give more influence to single-issue groups
  - D. Finding a winning coalition
    - 1. Ways of looking at various groups
      - a. How *loyal*, or percentage voting for party
      - b. How *important*, or number voting for party
    - 2. Democratic coalition
      - a. Blacks most loyal
      - b. Jews slipping somewhat
      - c. Hispanics somewhat mixed
      - d. Catholics, southerners, unionists departing the coalition lately
    - 3. Republican coalition
      - a. Party of business and professional people
      - b. Very loyal, defecting only in 1964
      - c. Usually wins vote of poor because of retired, elderly voters
    - 4. Contribution to Democratic coalition
      - a. Blacks loyal but small proportion
      - b. Catholics, unionists, and southerners largest part but least dependable
- V. The Effect of Elections on Policy
  - A. Political scientists are interested broad trends in winning and losing
  - B. Cynics: public policy remains more or less the same no matter which official or party is in office
    - 1. Comparison: Great Britain, with parliamentary system and strong parties, often sees marked changes, as in 1945
    - 2. Reply: evidence indicates that many American elections do make great differences in policy
    - 3. Why, then, the perception that elections do not matter? Because change alternates with consolidation; most elections are only retrospective judgments