

# APGOVPOL

## Chapter 10: Elections and Voting Behavior

### Key Words and Terms, Defined

civic duty: the belief that, in order to support democratic government, a citizen should always vote

electoral college: a unique American institution, created by the Constitution, providing for the selection of the president by electors chosen by the state parties; although the electoral college vote usually reflects a popular majority, the winner-take-all rule gives clout to big states

initiative/initiative petition: a process permitted in some states whereby voters may place proposed changes in the state constitution on a state referendum if sufficient signatures are obtained on petitions calling for such a referendum (see also legislative proposal and constitutional convention)

legitimacy: a characterization of elections by political scientists meaning that they are almost universally accepted as a fair and free method of selecting political leaders; when legitimacy is high, as in the U.S., even the losers accept the results peacefully

mandate theory of elections: the idea that the winning candidate has a mandate from the people to carry out his or her platforms and politics; politicians like the theory better than political scientists do

Motor Voter Act: passed in 1993, this Act went into the effect for the 1996 election; it requires states to permit people to register to vote at the same time they apply for driver's licenses; this should lessen the bureaucratic hassles of voter registration, though critics charge that it may also increase registration fraud

policy differences: the perception of a clear choice between the parties; those who see such choices are more likely to vote

policy voting: voting that occurs when electoral choices are made on the basis of where the candidates stand on policy issues; for the voter, policy voting is harder work than voting based on candidates' personalities or through party loyalty

political efficacy: the belief that one's political participation really matters – that one's vote can actually make a difference

referendum: a state-level method of direct legislation that gives voters a chance to approve or disapprove proposed legislation or a proposed constitutional amendment

retrospective voting: a theory of voting in which voters essentially ask this simple question: "What have you done for me, lately?"

suffrage: the right to vote

voter registration: a system adopted by the states that requires voters to register well in advance of election day; although a few states permit election day registration for presidential elections, advance registration dampens voter turnout