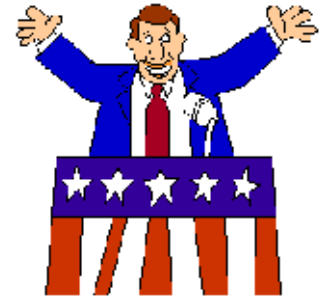


# GLOSSARY OF POLITICAL TERMS



## - A -

**absentee ballot** - A ballot marked by a registered voter and mailed to a board of elections before the date of an election, as by a person who will be out of town or working at the polling place on that day or by an ill or disabled person who cannot go to the polling place, and now also by senior citizens over a certain age. The advantages of absentee voting are convenience, speed, and economy. However, mail-in voting does present the problem of possible fraud: duplicate ballots could be cast, ineligible voters could cast ballots, or ballots could be "lost in the mail." One safeguard against fraud is the standard requirement that a voter must sign the envelope containing the ballot. Envelopes and ballots are separated at the board of elections before counting.

**appropriations** - The last phase of the Congressional budget process for a fiscal year. The amounts authorized for spending on given programs, agencies, and government functions are approved for disbursement, or appropriation, from the U.S. Treasury.

**at large** - Representing an entire state or other district rather than only one of its subdivisions. Vermont and six other states each elect their single U.S. Representative at large.

**authorizations** - The early phase of the Congressional budget process for a fiscal year. The President's budget recommendations for given programs, agencies, and government functions and those proposed within the Congress are discussed and debated. These actions result in the approval, or authorization, of specific spending limits.

## - B -

**baiting** - The practice of attacking or harassing a candidate with insults, distortions, etc., to provoke an angry reaction. Also, the practice utilized by candidates for public office to attract voter support through the use of racially-charged rhetoric or "code words" (sometimes referred to as "race-baiting").

**balanced budget** - A government's annual budget in which receipts are equal to outlays. Only the federal government has the authority to engage in long-term deficit spending. State laws mandate a balanced budget. While a balanced federal budget is to be preferred, there are some advantages in having an "unbalanced budget." Deficit spending can provide extra funds to stimulate the economy and create jobs during an economic downturn. This benefit must be weighed against the dangers of large deficits, such as devaluation of the currency and inflation in the cost of goods and services.

**ballot** - A piece of paper, computer card, ticket, etc. by which a vote is cast.

**ballot box stuffing** - Putting fraudulent ballots into a ballot box to affect the outcome of an election. The use of voting machines has helped to reduce this illegal practice. The jocular slogan "Vote early and vote often" is a reference to this activity.

**ballot proposition** - A policy question that must be decided by the voters during a primary or general election: see referendum and initiative, the two basic kinds of ballot proposition.

**bandwagon effect** - The tendency for a candidate or proposal that seems to be winning to gather additional support simply because of being ahead; momentum: also called the "snowball effect."

**beauty contest** - A simple straw vote or other selection process that has no effect on the allocation of delegates to a party nominating convention.

**Beltway, the** - The Beltway refers to Washington, D.C., especially when regarded as the center of U.S. government and politics. The name comes from the expressway around the District of Columbia and nearby areas.

**bicameral legislature** - A legislature consisting of two separate chambers or houses: see unicameral legislature.

**bill** - A draft of a law that has been formally introduced into a legislature for consideration. After a bill is passed and signed by the President or by the governor of a state, it becomes law. A bill is identified with the letters "HR" in the U.S. House of Representatives and "S" in the Senate, followed by an assigned number.

**Bill of Rights** - The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. These amendments deal with basic individual liberties such as freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and the press; protection against self-incrimination in a legal proceeding, unreasonable search and seizure, and cruel and unusual punishment; and the right to a speedy and fair trial.

**bipartisanship** - Cooperation on an issue or issues by two political parties, usually the two major parties controlling a government.

**Blue Dog Democrat** - A member of the Democratic Party whose views are ideologically aligned most closely with those of moderate Republicans. After the Republican Party took control of the U.S. House in 1994, 21 conservative Democrats formed what they called the "Blue Dog Coalition." They hoped to temper some of the more extreme objectives of the majority party and work with the Republicans to achieve common goals, such as a balanced federal budget.

**boll weevil** - A conservative Democratic politician from a state in the southern U.S.: a slang term.

**Buckley v. Valeo** - Landmark 1976 Supreme Court decision on campaign finance law that upheld the Federal Election Campaign Act's disclosure requirements, contribution limits, and provisions for public funding of presidential election campaigns. The Court ruled that spending limits cannot be imposed by law, except for the limits accepted voluntarily by presidential candidates who receive public funds, because this would have the effect of restricting "free speech." Thus, the ruling allows for unlimited spending by Congressional candidates (they do not receive public funds), and by persons or groups that campaign for or against a candidate, but do not coordinate their activities with any candidate or campaign. The ruling also says that candidates who do not receive public money do not have to limit spending of their own personal funds on their campaigns.

- C -

**Cabinet** - The group of official advisors to the President. The Cabinet is composed of the heads of the executive departments of government, including the Secretaries of State, Defense, and the Treasury. Cabinet officials are chosen by the President and approved by the Senate. There is no requirement that the President either consult with the Cabinet or follow its advice. However, the policy of consulting regularly with advisors dates back to the administration of George Washington, and all subsequent Presidents have followed this policy to a greater or lesser degree.



**campaign spending limitations** - Federal or state laws that put limits on the amount of money that candidates can spend to seek political office. For example, the Federal Election Campaign Act provided for the allocation of funds that amounted to about \$62 million for each major party's presidential candidate in 1996. If the candidate accepts this money, then no additional funds may be raised.

**canvassing** - The process of attempting to win votes by contacting voters directly. The candidate or a campaign worker typically contacts voters either door-to-door or by telephone. Canvassing is conducted increasingly via email or the Internet.

**caucus** - A meeting of party members for selecting delegates to a state or national nominating convention. In the 18th century, caucuses were local gatherings that became centers for political debate and political activity. Several of the early presidential candidates were selected at such caucuses until the 1830s, when national parties and national conventions came into prominence. Those who favor the caucus system cite the eligibility of the average citizen to participate and the benefits of face-to-face debate. Those who oppose the system cite the tendency of such meetings to be dominated by party leaders or to be sidetracked by individuals with strong political views that may not be representative of the party.

**centrist** - A person with moderate political opinions and policies.

**city clerk** - A municipal administrator whose duties vary greatly—from recording the minutes at city council meetings to carrying out functions similar to those of a city manager.

**city council** - The legislative body of a municipal government. The powers and duties of city councils vary but generally include the passing of local laws, or ordinances, and control over municipal expenditures.

**city manager** - The chief executive of a city operating under a council-manager form of government. The council-manager system is a form of municipal government in which an elected, usually nonpartisan, council sets policy, passes ordinances, and appoints the city manager, who administers the day-to-day operations of the municipality under the council's supervision. Almost half of all U.S. cities operate under such a system.

**closed primary** - A direct primary election in which the voters must declare party affiliation and may vote only for candidates of their party.

**coattails** - The ability to increase the chances of electoral victory of one's fellow party members on the strength of one's own popularity or influence. The popular politician is often said to "have coattails." Other candidates hope to secure victory by "riding on the (popular politician's) coattails."

**Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD)** - A nonprofit, nonpartisan corporation, established in 1987 to sponsor the presidential and vice-presidential debates and to undertake research and educational activities relating to the debates. The CPD sponsored all the debates in 1988, 1992, and 1996. It establishes criteria on a nonpartisan basis for participation in the debates. In addition to the eligibility requirements for office established by the Constitution, the CPD requires that candidates must have their names on the ballot in enough states so as to have a mathematical possibility of securing a majority vote in the Electoral College. In addition, candidates must demonstrate that they have the support of at least 15 percent of the electorate, as determined by five national polling organizations. The schedule for debates in the campaign 2000 cycle is: Presidential Debate on October 3 at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, MA; Vice Presidential Debate on October 5 at Centre College in Danville, KY; Presidential Debate on October 11 at Lake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC; Presidential Debate on October 17 at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. All the debates will be televised on a major network.

**Congress** - The legislative branch of the U.S. government that makes the nation's laws. The U.S. Congress is composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Constitution gives Congress "all legislative powers" of the federal government. At the heart of Congress's lawmaking powers is its "power of the purse," its control over government taxing and spending. The Constitution grants to the Congress a wide range of powers, including the authority to coin money, regulate trade, declare war, and raise and equip military forces.



**Congressional district (CD)** - Any of the political subdivisions into which the nation is divided for electing members to the House of Representatives. There are 435 Congressional districts. Currently, each district contains approximately 570,000 people. However, seats in the House are reapportioned every ten years, after the decennial census. Although the number of seats and, consequently, the number of Congressional districts has been fixed at 435, individual states may gain or lose districts as a result of reapportionment.

**conservative** - A conservative is a person to the right of center on the U.S. political spectrum. Of the two main political parties, the Republican Party is regarded as being the more conservative. Conservatives tend to uphold tradition and oppose major changes in laws and institutions. Change, when thought to be necessary, should be gradual and minimal. Conservatives generally oppose "big government," organized labor, social programs that benefit the lower socio-economic class, and civil rights and civil liberties legislation; they tend to support free-market economic policies, low taxes, increased defense spending, and those economic policies that tend to be attractive to the wealthy, owners of businesses, investors, etc..

**constituency** - All the people, especially the voters, who are served by a particular elected official, especially the constituents of a legislator. The people who live in a Congressional district are the constituents of a Representative.

**Constitution (U.S.)** - The Constitution is the document containing the fundamental law of the United States. The original document, comprising seven articles, was ratified in 1789. The first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) were adopted in 1791. The U.S. Constitution is the oldest written constitution continuously in force. The famous opening words, "We the people . . .," assert that the government derives its power from the consent of the American people. The Constitution lays out the composition and structure of the federal government and enumerates the powers of its three branches. The powers that are not delegated to the federal government are, under the 10th Amendment, "reserved to the States, or to the people." The Constitution also describes the procedure for adopting amendments. There are now 27 amendments, the most recent ratified in 1992.

**convention** - An official gathering of the delegates of one party to select candidates for office and formulate party policies (the party's platform). National party conventions are held during the summer before November presidential elections. The presidential and vice-presidential candidates (the presidential ticket) are nominated by the delegates attending their party's national convention. Delegates are from the each of the states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the various U.S. Territories.

**cosponsor** - Any of the additional members of a legislature who show their support for a piece of legislation proposed by its sponsor by signing the bill before it is introduced.

**county** - The basic unit for administrative management of state government typically governed by an elected board or commission. Each state determines for itself how many counties it will have. Connecticut and Rhode Island have no counties at all. The titles for elected county officials vary and include supervisors, judges, jurors, and commissioners. The county is largest administrative subdivision of most states in the U.S. The structure of the county system and the duties and powers of county officials are determined by each state and vary widely from state to state. In addition to various administrative functions, the county may function as an important subdivision in the structure of a state's judicial system.

**county clerk** - The secretary to a county board, whose job includes maintaining county records. This is an elected office in more than half the states.

**county commissioner** - An elected member of the governing body of a county government. In some states, county commissioners are called supervisors.

- D -

**dark horse** - An almost unknown contestant regarded by few people as a likely winner. A person who gets or may get the nomination unexpectedly, often by a compromise.

**deficit** - The amount by which budget expenditures exceed government revenues, or income, in a given fiscal year.

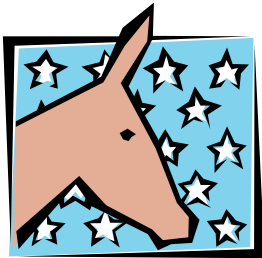
**delegate** - A representative to a nominating convention, especially a national party convention. Also a member of the lower house of the legislature in Maryland, Virginia, or West Virginia. Also a nonvoting Member of Congress, representing the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, or the Virgin Islands of the United States. (The nonvoting Member of Congress from Puerto Rico is called the Resident Commissioner.)

**delegate, super** - A new category of national convention delegate created by the Democratic Party in 1984 to ensure that public officials and party officials could attend and participate in conventions as delegates. Restoring the voice of the party leadership but traditionally remaining uncommitted to any candidate, superdelegates are chosen at caucuses and state conventions. The Republican Party does not have superdelegates but traditionally selects party leaders as delegates.

**democracy** - Government in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives. The concept originated in ancient Greece but was in practice much different from what it is understood to be today. Democracy is used generally to denote political systems which operate with the participation and consent of the citizens, as through the practice of regular elections.

**democracy, direct** - Any governing system in which decisions are made directly by the people rather than by elected representatives. Examples include processes such as the initiative and referendum, by which citizens vote directly to enact laws, and the New England-style town meeting.

**democracy, representative** - A form of government in which citizens rule through elected representatives or proxies. Representatives are put up for reelection periodically in order to keep them accountable to the people whom they represent. The United States is an example of a representative democracy.



**Democratic Party** - One of the two major political parties in the United States; the oldest of the two. It emerged in the late 1820s from a split in the Democratic-Republican Party, which had, in turn, developed from the Republican Party led by Thomas Jefferson. The party has adhered to various policies over its history. Today, it is generally characterized as the more liberal of the two major parties and as being more favorably disposed toward the working class and the poor, with a greater tendency to favor government expenditures for social welfare programs. In the last decade, however, the party has moved toward the center of the political spectrum.

**direct primary election** - A preliminary election in which candidates for public office are chosen by direct vote of the people rather than by delegates at a convention. In a closed primary, voters must declare a party affiliation and may vote only for candidates of their party.

**divided government** - A situation, in federal or state government, in which the President or governor is a member of one political party and at least one chamber of the legislature is controlled by the other party. Divided government occurs frequently in the U.S. political system. Historically, its impact has been to discourage radical change and to motivate the members of both parties to come to a compromise on proposed legislation.

- E -

**Election Day** - The Tuesday after the first Monday in November in an election year (election of federal candidates)

**election, midterm** - An election for seats in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives that occurs in the middle of a President's four-year term. For example, the Congressional election of 1998 was a midterm election. Midterm elections are also called "off-

year elections." The results are sometimes interpreted as a popular expression of opinion regarding that president's performance for the first two years of the term. Midterm elections determine one third of the U.S. Senate and all members of the House of Representatives, as well as many state and local officials.

**elector** - A person who elects others; qualified voter. A member of the Electoral College.

**Electoral College** - The group of representatives that formally elects the President and the Vice President. The number of electors from each state is equal to the sum of the state's Senators and Representatives in the Congress. The District of Columbia received the right to be represented by electors in 1961 with the ratification of the 23rd Amendment. Today, the Electoral College has 538 representatives. The Founding Fathers rejected the idea of direct elections. This was, of course, a time when communication and travel were difficult and there were no national parties. In the first presidential election, George Washington and John Adams were elected President and Vice President, respectively, by the Electoral College. There was no popular vote. The power to determine the method of choosing electors belongs to the states. Generally, the parties select the slate of electors, who are then chosen by popular vote. The electors will assemble in their respective state capitals on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December. According to the Constitution, the electors may exercise their own discretion in voting, but in practice all the votes in a given state go to the presidential candidate who has received the plurality of the popular vote. The candidate who becomes the President will require at least 270 electoral votes. Some have proposed replacing the Electoral College with a system of direct elections. Such proposals would require amending the Constitution. A system of direct elections would not only reduce the power of the two major political parties, but would also reduce the importance of the states in the electoral process.

**electronic voting** - The use of electronic equipment and computerized systems to tabulate votes. There is no fully integrated electronic system for tabulating the votes in national elections at this time. Electronic voting is used in some municipal elections. An electronic voting system is used for certain roll call votes in the House of Representatives.

**entitlement** - Any of the benefits to which one is entitled, or to which one is given a legal right, by meeting the eligibility requirements of some government program. Entitlement programs include Social Security, Medicare, and Veterans' pensions.

**executive branch** - The branch of the government that administers the laws and affairs of the nation. According to Article II of the Constitution, "The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States."

The President is called the Chief Executive. The executive branch is the machinery by which the Chief Executive carries out the duties of the office. The executive branch is made up of the Executive Office, the executive departments, and a wide array of independent regulatory agencies. The Executive Office comprises various individuals and agencies that work directly with the President. It includes the White House office staff, the President's physician, and various advisors and assistants, such as speechwriters. The Office also includes various agencies, such as the National Security Council and the Office of Management and Budget. The executive departments include the Departments of State, Defense, the Treasury, Justice, Interior, Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, Transportation, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Veterans Affairs. The heads of these departments make up the President's Cabinet. The independent agencies administer a wide range of programs that touch upon every American's life daily. The agencies are empowered to establish rules and impose penalties. Among the 100-plus agencies are the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Housing Administration, and the Federal Reserve System.



**exit poll** - A poll taken of voters as they leave the place of voting. Such polls are often conducted and widely reported by the media. The pollster asks a small percentage of the voters whether they voted for or against particular candidates and issues. Presumably, such polls should be more accurate than polls taken weeks or months before an election, when many voters may not be committed to voting a certain way.

- F -

**fat cat** - A slang term for a wealthy, influential individual who contributes heavily to a political party or campaign.

**Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)** - Act of Congress passed in 1971 that overhauled existing laws regulating contributions to and expenditures for political parties and candidates in federal elections. The Act was amended in 1974 (at which time the Federal Election Commission was created), in 1976 (after the Supreme Court's decision in Buckley v. Valeo), and in 1979. The FECA sets limits on the source and amount of political contributions and has established public disclosure requirements for those who make contributions. Despite these reforms, there is great and ongoing concern over soft money contributions to the two major political parties.

**Federal Election Commission (FEC)** - An independent regulatory agency created by Congress in 1974 for the purpose of enforcing the terms of the Federal Election Campaign Act. The Commission is made up of six members who serve six-year terms. Commissioners are chosen by the President and must be confirmed by the Senate. No more than three commissioners may be members of the same political party. Chairmanship of the Commission rotates on an annual basis.

**federal government** - The central government of the United States, created by the union of the states under the Constitution.

**fiscal year (FY)** - A 12-month period of financial activity, designated for budgetary purposes. The U.S. federal fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. FY 2001 begins on October 1, 2000.

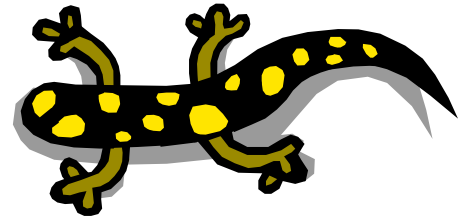
**franchise** - The constitutional right to vote.

**front-runner** - The candidate who is leading the race for the party's nomination or for the office itself.

## - G -

**gender gap** - The apparent difference between men and women in values, attitudes, voting patterns, etc. This term is used especially by pollsters and the media. In recent elections, statistically, American women have tended to prefer Democrat to Republican candidates, leaning toward the more liberal side of the political spectrum.

**gerrymander** - To divide (a voting area) so as to give one political party a majority in as many districts as possible or weaken the voting strength of an ethnic or racial group, an urban population, etc. A re-districting of voting areas to the advantage of one party or the disadvantage of a group, region, etc. Such a district is often odd-shaped and fails the test of geographic compactness. This term was coined to deride an 1812 redistricting of a county in Massachusetts: the name of Governor Elbridge Gerry was combined with the latter part of salamander, which the meandering district resembled on the map.



**G.O.P.** - The acronym for "Grand Old Party," a nostalgic nickname for the Republican Party.

**governor** - The elected chief executive of a state government. The governor's role in state government is similar in many respects to the President's role in the federal government. For most states, the term of office is four years. However, in three states—New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont—the governor serves a two-year term. If the governor is unable to complete a term of office, the state's lieutenant governor replaces the governor.

**governor, lieutenant** - The elected official who replaces the governor if he or she is unable to complete a term of office. This position has similarities to that of Vice President of the U.S. However, in a number of states, the lieutenant governor is elected independently of the governor and thus may be of a different political party.

**grass roots** - The common people, originally those of rural or nonurban areas, thought of as best representing the basic, direct political interests of the electorate. also, The basic or fundamental source of support of a movement, group, etc.

**Green Party** - Officially, The Greens/Green Party USA, an alternative political party and social movement, was inspired by a party in Germany. It was initiated in 1984 and more formally structured by 1989. It prepares candidates to stand for election at many levels of government. As its name suggests, the Green Party is an outgrowth of the environmental movement. Other basic concerns include social justice, respect for diversity, and support for a democratically accountable community-based economy. The Greens espouse nonviolence as their method of promoting social change. To date, no Green Party candidates have won an election at the federal level. People who vote for Green Party candidates often point to the value of their protest vote.

**gross domestic product (GDP)** - The total value of the annual output of goods and services produced within the nation's borders. The GDP excludes the foreign output of American firms but includes the domestic output of foreign firms. The GDP of the U.S. was over \$8.5 trillion in 1998.

**gross national product (GNP)** - The monetary value of all of the goods and services produced by a nation in a given year—one of the most important tools for measuring the health of a nation's economy.

## - H -

**hard money** - Contributions made to political parties and candidates in federal elections that are legal under the Federal Election Campaign Act or that come under the regulatory oversight of the Federal Election Commission.

**House of Representatives** - The lower house, or chamber, of the U.S. Congress. The name is also used for the lower house in most of the 49 states having bicameral (two-chamber) legislatures. A member of the U.S. House of Representatives is called a Representative, as in the Constitution, but is also called a Congressman or Congresswoman. Each Representative represents a Congressional district. There are 435 Representatives in the House. Although the number of Representatives has been fixed by law, the Congressional districts are reapportioned after each decennial census. Thus, a state may gain or lose seats in the House because of demographics. However, the Constitution requires that each have at least one Representative. A Representative must be at least 25 years old and have been an American citizen for at least seven years. Representatives must live in the state that they represent. They are not required to live in the Congressional district that they represent, but most of them do. Deliberating proposed legislation is the chief duty of the House. Most of this work is carried out by various committees and subcommittees, and routine legislation is passed by unanimous consent agreements that eliminate the need for a vote by the full House. Full debate on the floor of the House tends to occur when a bill is controversial. In addition to its legislative function, the House also has the responsibility for impeaching federal officials and, under certain circumstances, electing the President. American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands have Delegates who serve two-year terms in the House. Puerto Rico has a Resident Commissioner who serves a four-year term. These Delegates and the Commissioner are permitted to debate and vote in committee but may not vote on the floor of the House.

## - I -

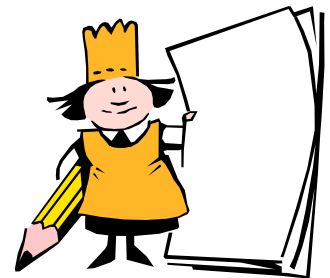
**inauguration** - A ceremony at which an elected official is formally inducted into office. Inauguration Day, the day on which the President is inaugurated, is January 20th in the year following an election. The newly elected or reelected President takes an oath of office, as required by the Constitution. The oath reads: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

**incumbent** - The person holding a particular political office. Generally, an incumbent seeking reelection has a better chance of winning than those challenging the incumbent do.

**Independent** - A person with no particular party affiliation; specifically, a voter who is not registered as either a Democrat or a Republican. Since most party members can be expected to vote for candidates of their own party, much campaign effort goes toward winning the votes of independents. About one-third of the electorate describes itself as independent. Independents are excluded from voting in primary elections that are restricted to registered party members. Many states hold open primaries that are open to all voters.

**independent expenditure** - Money spent on political advertising in support of a particular candidate that comes from outside the candidate's own election organization. Generally, there is no limit on the amount of such independent expenditure.

**initiative** - The right of citizens to introduce a matter for legislation to the legislature or directly to the voters. Also, the procedure by which such matters are introduced. The initiative allows citizens to attempt to get laws passed in cases where the legislature refuses to act. Generally, a petition signed by a specified percentage of the voters is required for placing an initiative on the ballot or on the legislative calendar. Initiative petitions are allowed by many local governments but by fewer than half the states.



## - J -

**judicial branch** - The branch of government that administers justice and settles legal disputes. The judicial functions are carried out through the operation of the nation's court systems. The federal government and each of the states have a system of courts. The federal judicial branch comprises chiefly the U.S. District Courts, the U.S. Courts of Appeals (also called federal circuit courts), and the Supreme Court of the United States. There are also a number of federal courts having specialized functions. Cases having federal jurisdiction are typically heard in the district courts. The circuit courts and the Supreme Court are appellate courts, reviewing cases and ruling on points of law raised on appeal from district court decisions.

- L -



**lame duck** - An elected official whose term extends beyond the time of the election at which he or she was not reelected. This term covers incumbents who have been defeated, are not seeking reelection, or are barred by law (through term limits) from succeeding themselves. Such an officeholder is often seen as weak or ineffectual, especially by members of the opposing party, who are waiting for the successor to take over.

**left** - A liberal or radical position, especially one varying from moderate socialism to communism, or a party or group advocating this: often preceded by the. The term has its origin in the position of the seats occupied by members in some European legislatures. See also right.

**leftist** - A person whose political position is liberal or radical.

**left wing** - The more liberal or radical section of a political party, organization, etc.

**legislative branch** - One of the three branches of government, at federal and state levels, composed of elected representatives and having responsibility mainly for making laws and appropriating funds. The legislative branch of the federal government is composed of Representatives and Senators and their staffs and committee staffs. Related support agencies include the General Accounting Office, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Library of Congress.

**liberal** - Favoring reform or progress, as in religion, education, or socioeconomic conditions; specifically, favoring political reforms tending toward democracy and personal freedom for the individual; progressive. Liberals tend to favor greater federal power to remedy social inequities, and to support freedom of personal choice and behavior. Liberals are described as being left of center on the political spectrum. Of the two major political parties, the Democratic Party is generally regarded as being more liberal.

**Libertarian Party** - An alternative political party in the U.S. that prepares candidates to stand for election at many levels of government. Libertarians support individual rights and minimal government involvement in people's lives. The Party's principles emphasize prohibiting the initiation of physical force against others and the rights to liberty of speech and action and to property. To date, no Libertarian Party candidates have won an election at the federal level.

**lieutenant governor** - The elected official who replaces the governor if he or she is unable to complete a term of office. This position has similarities to that of Vice President of the U.S. However, in a number of states, the lieutenant governor is elected independently of the governor and thus may be of a different political party.



**line-item veto** - Executive power to reject a section of a bill, especially one containing specific appropriations or tax breaks, without vetoing the whole bill. Governors of some states have this authority. Congress gave this power to the President in 1997. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the law in 1998, declaring it unconstitutional. Some members of Congress said that they would try to pass another law although the Court had said a constitutional amendment would be required.

**Lobby** - A group or organization—sometimes called a "pressure group"—that seeks to influence legislation, administrative action, and/or public opinion. Commercial and industrial interests, trade associations, labor unions, organizations representing ethnic and racial groups, professional networks, citizen organizations, and representatives of foreign concerns work to achieve their special interests. A lobby's power to influence, however, often may be based not on the merits of its arguments, but on its size, its financial and membership resources, and the astuteness of its representatives.

**lobbyist** - A person who represents a lobby and presents its views to members of a government body.

- M -

**majority** - The number by which the votes cast for the candidate, bill, etc. receiving more than half of the votes exceed the remaining votes. See **plurality**.

**majority leader** - In the House of Representatives and the Senate, the leader of the majority party. Also called the "floor leader," the majority leader works to advance the majority party's legislative program.

**majority party** - In the House of Representatives and the Senate, the political party having the majority of seats. The majority party in each chamber of the Congress is able to advance its legislative program provided it can get its members to vote along

party lines. The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate are members of the majority party, as are the chairs of the various congressional committees.

**matching funds** - Federal money given to presidential candidates that matches dollar-for-dollar the private contributions they have received from individuals. Eligible candidates in the presidential primaries receive up to \$250 in matching funds for each individual contribution they receive, provided they agree to limit their campaign spending to \$37 million.

**mayor**- The elected or appointed head of a municipal government, usually the chief administrative official but sometimes a largely ceremonial figure having little executive authority.

**Medicaid** - The federally aided, state-administered program that provides medical benefits to low-income people who are in need of health care.

**Medicare** - America's national health insurance program for the elderly and disabled. Medicare covers certain medical and hospital expenses of people over the age of 65 as well as those people under the age of 65 who are disabled. The money comes chiefly from the Social Security fund.

**Member of Congress** - A person who has been elected to either the U.S. Senate or the House of Representatives. A member of the Senate is usually referred to as Senator and a member of the House of Representatives as Congressman or Congresswoman.

**midterm election** - An election for seats in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives that occurs in the middle of a President's four-year term. For example, the Congressional election of 1998 was a midterm election. Midterm elections are also called "off-year elections." The results are sometimes interpreted as a popular expression of opinion regarding that president's performance for the first two years of the term. Midterm elections determine one third of the U.S. Senate and all members of the House of Representatives, as well as many state and local officials.

**minority leader** - In the House of Representatives and the Senate, the leader of the minority party. Also called the "floor leader," the minority leader works to advance the minority party's legislative program.

**minority party** - In the House of Representatives and the Senate, the political party having the minority of seats.

**motor-voter law** - A law that enables a citizen to register to vote when applying for, or renewing, a driver's license. The federal motor-voter law is the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, which became effective on January 1, 1995.

**mudslinging** - The practice of making malicious verbal attacks against one's opponent in a political race. Mudslinging is a tactic of "dirty politics" and the running of a "negative campaign." It is a tactic that most political candidates accuse their opponents of using. It has a long history in American politics.

- N -



**national debt** - The total debt incurred by the central government of a nation, specifically by the federal government of the United States. The U.S. national debt consists of yearly budget deficits, funds borrowed by one government agency from another (especially from trust funds), foreign and domestic loans, and interest. As of May 4, 2000, the national debt stood at approximately \$5,771,678,017,000 (five and three-quarters trillion dollars), or an average of about \$21,000 per person in the U.S. The government sells securities to finance its debt.

**national party (nominating) convention** - The official gathering held, by each of the major political parties, during the summer before a presidential election, to nominate the party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates and announce the party's platform. The conventions bring together the delegates of each of the states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the various U.S. Territories. They have become large media events.

**negative ads** - Political advertising designed to attack an opponent by calling into question character or past political record. Negative ads typically seek to give the impression that the opponent is dishonest or hypocritical in something said or done in the political sphere. Such ads may not only expose real personal foibles, crimes, and misdemeanors, but also may try to demonstrate, usually through distortions of fact, that the opponent is likely to be an unsuitable officeholder.

**nominee** - A person who is nominated, or proposed by others as a candidate for public office.

**nonpartisan** - Not involving or influenced by a particular political party. A nonpartisan election is one in which the candidates on the ballot are not identified according to their party affiliation.;

## - O -

**open primary** - A primary election in which the voter does not need to declare party affiliation (see **primary, open** below for important information)

## - P -

**partisan** - A person who strongly supports a political party. Approximately two-thirds of Americans consider themselves as being partisans of either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party or independents with partisan leanings or high levels of party loyalty.

**platform** - A political party's formal written statement of its principles, policies, and goals, which is drafted, revised, and publicized during the presidential nomination process. The adoption of a platform is one of the main functions of a national party convention. The major challenge to the platform committee is to write a platform with which all or most party members can identify and which all party candidates will embrace and promote during their campaigns.

**plurality** - The number of votes in an election that the leading candidate obtains over the next highest candidate. If candidate A gets 65 votes, B gets 40, and C gets 35, then A has a plurality of 25 and wins the election. Note that, in this case, no candidate has a majority of votes.

**pocket veto** - The indirect veto by the President of the U.S. of a bill presented to him by Congress within ten days of its adjournment, by failing to sign and return the bill before Congress adjourns.

**political action committee (PAC)** - An organization representing the interests of a corporation, labor union, trade association, etc., that solicits and collects political campaign contributions from individuals and distributes them to particular candidates. By law, a PAC may donate up to \$5,000 per candidate per election.

**politician** - A person engaged in politics, especially party politics, professionally or otherwise. Often, a person holding or seeking political office. This term is frequently used in a derogatory sense, with implications of seeking personal or partisan gain, scheming, opportunism, etc.

**poll** - A canvassing, or surveying, of a selected or random group of people to collect information, or to attempt to discover public opinion. The information obtained depends on the makeup of the group selected for questioning—the sample—as well as the choice of questions to be asked and the way the questions are worded.

**polls** - A place where votes are cast and recorded.

**poll, straw** - An unofficial vote or poll taken to determine the general opinion among a group on a given issue.

**pork barrel** - Government appropriations for political patronage, as for local improvements to please legislators' constituents or to create jobs in the legislator's district.

**precinct** - A subdivision of a ward, as for voting. The smallest political unit in the American electoral system and the basic building block for political organization. A precinct has between 200 and 1,000 voters. Following the 1990 census, there were about 147,000 precincts in the U.S. Each party normally appoints a precinct captain as party leader in the neighborhood and as its representative on the larger city or county party committee. Precincts may also elect delegates to city or county party conventions. Today, the precinct captain's job mainly involves education and organization, promoting the benefits of party membership, and registering new voters.

**presidential elector** - A member of the Electoral College. Each state chooses as many presidential electors as it has Senators and Representatives in Congress. The District of Columbia also chooses three presidential electors.

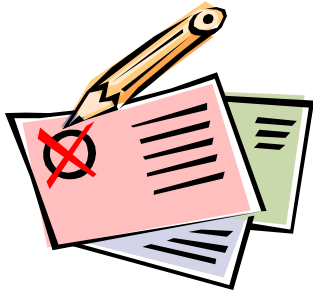
**President of the Senate** - The Vice President of the U.S. in the role of presiding officer of the U.S. Senate.

**President of the United States** - The chief executive officer of the federal government; head of the executive branch. The President must be at least 35 years of age and have been born in the United States. The President's main powers and duties are to serve as commander-in-chief of the armed forces; to conduct foreign policy and make treaties; to appoint ambassadors, heads of Cabinet departments, and federal judges; to grant pardons and reprieves for federal crimes; to approve or



veto legislation; and to report formally to Congress each year on the State of the Union. The President's term of office is four years; no one may be elected to more than two terms.

**President Pro Tempore** - The chief presiding officer of the U.S. Senate in the absence of the Vice President—usually the Senator of the majority party having the longest record of continuous service.



**primary election** - An election to select a party's candidates for public office, held some time before the general election. Primaries cover offices at all levels of government.

**primary, closed** - A primary election in which voters must declare party affiliation and may vote only for candidates of their party. Most state primaries are closed. Between 37 and 42 states hold primaries each presidential election cycle. Republicans hold primaries in more states than Democrats.

**primary, open** - A primary election in which the voter need not declare party affiliation. A voter registered with one party can vote for the candidates of another party. Independent voters who are not affiliated with a party can vote for the candidates of any particular party. This kind of primary is also called a "cross-over" primary. (Note: A U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case *California Democratic Party v. Jones* (June 2, 2000) ruled that California's "blanket" primary – an open primary – violated a political party's First Amendment right of association – therefore, this type of primary election may disappear from the U.S. political system.)

**progressive** - Favoring, working for, or characterized by progress or improvement, as through political or social reform. Also, a person who advocates or favors policies promoting political or social reform.

**proportional representation** - A system of voting that gives minority parties representation in a legislature in proportion to their share of the popular vote. Various methods of dividing the vote have been proposed. Some European nations have adopted these practices. The delegates to the Democratic national convention are selected through a form of proportional representation. Some states' Republican convention delegates are chosen on a winner-take-all basis. Presidential elections also are structured on a winner-take-all basis—the winner of a state's popular vote receives all of the state's electoral votes.

**protest vote** - A vote for the candidate of an alternative party that is cast not to elect that candidate, but to indicate disapproval of the major political parties and their candidates.

**public funding** - The financing, in part, of presidential election campaigns from a fund consisting entirely of voluntary contributions and maintained by the U.S. Treasury. U.S. taxpayers check off the appropriate box on their federal income tax return to authorize that a dollar or more be contributed to the presidential election campaign fund. Candidates who qualify for public money receive direct contributions and must agree to follow certain rules and restrictions. Advocates of complete public funding of elections and restriction of the use of soft money argue that such practices would make the election process less vulnerable to the influence of very large contributors to election campaigns.

**push polling** - A public-opinion survey technique used to test campaign themes by asking specific questions about an issue or a candidate. Some campaign organizations have used this practice unscrupulously by injecting false, misleading, or otherwise negative information about opposing candidates into the questions they pose to voters.

- R -

**Reagan Democrat** - Any registered Democratic voter that broke ranks with the party and voted for the Republican Ronald Reagan in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections. The Reagan Democrats constituted a significant voting bloc in those elections. The name continues to be used as subsequent Republican candidates have attempted, rather unsuccessfully, to retain these voters. The Reagan Democrats have been characterized generally as "blue-collar" and "working class," and include a strong ethnic and Catholic component.

**re-districting** - The process of redrawing the geographic boundaries of Congressional districts. The majority party in the state legislature typically controls the process, using this power to redraw the boundaries so as to increase its chances of winning future congressional elections.

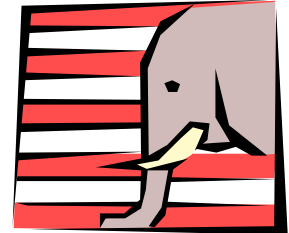
**referendum** - The submission of a law or proposed law to a direct vote of the electorate. Referendums are used at the state and local levels. Some issues must be submitted to the electorate, such as amendments to a state constitution or increases in property taxes. Occasionally, legislatures will submit controversial issues to the voters. Issues raised by initiative petition are also commonly submitted to a popular vote.

**Reform Party** - The political party formed by H. Ross Perot in 1995. Texas entrepreneur Perot had mounted a successful third-party campaign during the presidential election of 1992. Running a largely self-financed campaign under the banner of his "United We Stand, America" organization, Perot received nearly 19 percent of the vote. Perot's candidacy in 1996 under his newly formed Reform Party fared less well. He received about eight percent of the vote. Since 1996, the party has experienced considerable turmoil, with splits and defections.

**Representative, State** - A member of the lower house of a state legislature.

**Representative, U.S.** - A member of the lower house of Congress (the House of Representatives).

**Republican Party** - One of the two major political parties in the United States. The party was formed out of the antislavery movement and its first presidential candidate, John Charles Fremont, ran and lost the 1856 election on an antislavery platform. With a broader range of issues and a moderate position on slavery, the Republican candidate in 1860, Abraham Lincoln, defeated the candidates of a sectionally divided Democratic Party. The Republican Party has pursued various policies over its history, but it has been characterized generally in recent times as the more conservative party and as the party that is more favorably disposed toward the interests of conservative WASPs (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants), business and the wealthy.



**revenues** - Receipts collected by the government from taxes, duties, user fees, and premiums from social insurance programs.

**right** - A conservative or reactionary position, especially one varying from moderate capitalism to fascism, or a party or group advocating this: often found with "the" before "right." The term has its origin in the position of the seats occupied by members in some European legislatures. See also **left**.

**right wing** - The more conservative or reactionary section of a political party, organization, etc.

**running mate** - A candidate for the lesser of two closely associated offices in his or her relationship to the candidate for the greater office. The vice-presidential candidate is the running mate of the presidential candidate.

## - S -

**Secretary** - An official in charge of an executive department of government. In the federal government, such officials include the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Defense. In addition to heading their respective departments, these officials also serve as members of the President's Cabinet.

**Senate** - The upper house, or chamber, of the U.S. Congress. The name is also used for the upper house in most of the 49 states having bicameral (two-chamber) legislatures. There are 100 Senators, two from each state. Senators serve six-year terms. Originally, Senators were to be chosen by the legislature of each state, according to Article I of the Constitution. The ratification of the 17th Amendment in 1913 changed this practice, and Senators, like Representatives, are now chosen in general elections. Elections are staggered so that one-third of the Senate comes up for election every two years. A Senator must be 30 years old and have been an American citizen for at least nine years. Senators must be residents of the state that they represent. As in the House of Representatives, deliberating proposed legislation is the chief duty of the Senate. Bills of all sorts may be introduced and discussed in the Senate, with the exception of bills for raising revenue, which must originate in the House. The Senate, like the House, uses a system of committees and subcommittees, and most legislation is passed by unanimous consent agreements. The Senate is required to approve treaties and confirm the nomination of certain officials, such as Supreme Court justices. The Senate also has the responsibility for exercising judgment in cases of impeachment.

**Senator, State** - A member of the upper house of a state legislature.

**Senator, U.S.** - A member of the upper house of Congress (the Senate).

**separation of powers** - The distinct jurisdiction, powers, and responsibilities of each of the three branches of government. Generally, the legislative branch makes the laws, the executive branch implements them, and the judicial branch enforces them. The Framers of the Constitution apportioned governmental power among the three branches so that no official or group of officials could establish a monopoly on power. In addition, they established a system of "checks and balances" so that each branch would possess the means of reigning in the exercise of power by the other two branches.

**Social Security** - America's contributory social insurance program providing benefits to millions of people. Workers contribute financially to the system during their working years and earn entitlement to family benefits upon retirement, disability, or death. Currently, nearly 44 million Americans receive benefits under the Old-Age and Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) programs that make up Social Security.

**soft money** - Money contributed to a political party but not designated for a particular candidate. Soft-money contributions are outside the restrictions of the Federal Election Campaign Act. They have become controversial because they are regarded by many as a "loophole" in the regulation of campaign funding. Soft-money contributions were supposed to be used primarily for general party purposes, such as voter-registration drives, "get-out-the-vote" campaigns, and advertising that highlights the party platform but does not support particular candidates. However, the national committees of each party are allowed to distribute money to individual candidates' campaigns. Whereas the federal election law sets strict limits on direct contributions to candidates, no such limits exist with respect to soft money. Thus, direct contributions that are not permitted under the federal law may nevertheless get to the candidates indirectly by means of the soft-money loophole. Although soft money has been a heated topic of political debate and reform legislation has been approved by the House of Representatives, the Senate has repeatedly blocked a vote on the issue.



**sound bite** - A brief, quotable remark or excerpt, as from a speech made by a politician or candidate for office that is repeated on radio and TV news programs. Sound bites are regarded by some as being trite and superficial, and the term is often used dismissively.

**Speaker of the House** - The presiding officer of the House of Representatives and the leader of its majority party. By managing the majority party's members and regulating the legislative process in the House, the Speaker can wield considerable power. The Speaker ranks just behind the Vice President in the order of presidential succession.

**special interests** - Individuals and organizations that attempt to influence the political process so as to advance their own particular interests. Special interests include corporations and labor unions, wealthy individuals, and any number of advocacy groups. They are usually regarded as having a self-interested agenda that is contrary to the interests of the American people. Politicians of one party will denounce the special interests associated with the other party while portraying the special interests associated with their own party in a favorable light. Special interests have nevertheless become a significant part of the American political process. They seek favorable legislation or other benefits from public officials by providing them with research information, voting endorsements, and financial contributions. There has been heated debate over the degree to which special interests have been able to influence public policy overall and on a variety of specific issues.

**spin** - The particular interpretation or emphasis applied to information, so as to enhance the public image of, or to minimize political damage to, a politician. Spin can also be used as a weapon against a political opponent or the opposition party. Politicians routinely seek to take credit for good things, whether or not they were personally responsible for bringing them about, and to distance themselves from bad things, including their own mistakes. The considerable role of the mass media as the intermediary between the politician and the citizenry has made putting the "right slant" on information a matter of the utmost importance. Politicians and candidates, at least at the national level, now have consultants, spokespersons, etc.—spin doctors or spinmeisters—who help devise and deliver the right spin to the public.

**split ticket** - A ballot cast for candidates of more than one party. Although many voters affiliate themselves with one of the major parties and vote loyally along party lines, a sizable number of independents and swing voters vote for candidates and issues based upon their particular merits.

**state legislature** - The legislative branch of a state government. Each of its members is a state legislator.

**State Representative** - A member of the lower house of a state legislature.

**State Senator** - A member of the upper house of a state legislature.

**states' rights** - All the rights and powers which the U.S. Constitution neither grants to the federal government nor denies to the state governments. Throughout American history, disputes over the exact division of authority between federal and state governments have arisen from time to time, focusing on a wide variety of issues—the Civil War was the outcome of such a dispute. The federal courts have the power to settle disputes over states' rights.

**statute** - A law passed by a legislature.

**straight ticket** - A ballot cast for candidates of only one party.

**straw vote or straw poll** - An unofficial vote or poll taken to determine the general opinion among a group on a given issue.

**stump speech**- A speech delivered by a candidate for public office on the campaign trail. A "stump" is the particular place where such a speech is delivered. The term is a figurative usage that refers to earlier times when a candidate might deliver a campaign speech while standing on a tree stump.

**suffrage** - The right to vote. The right is also called **the franchise**. Historically, the right to vote was restricted to white males and had the further requirement of property ownership. Over the course of U.S. history, the franchise has been expanded by various acts of Congress and, chiefly, by various amendments to the Constitution. Although the states may establish requirements for voting eligibility, they may not deny or abridge the right to vote because of race (15th Amendment, ratified 1870) or sex (19th Amendment, ratified 1920). In 1971, the voting age was lowered to 18 years by the ratification of the 26th Amendment.



**superdelegate** - A new category of national convention delegate created by the Democratic Party in 1984 to ensure that public officials and party officials could attend and participate in conventions as delegates. Restoring the voice of the party leadership but traditionally remaining uncommitted to any candidate, superdelegates are chosen at caucuses and state conventions. The Republican Party does not have superdelegates but traditionally selects party leaders as delegates.

**Super Tuesday** - A Tuesday in a presidential election year when many primary elections are held. The name Super Tuesday entered the political lexicon during the 1988 election campaign, when a group of Southern states decided to hold their primary elections on the same day, March 9th, early in the campaign. By voting early and as a bloc, these Southern states hoped to have a substantial influence upon the nominating process. In Election 2000, the term has been used generally of March 7th, the date on which at least ten states held primary elections. These contests were held in states from various regions of the country, including highly populated New York and California. Because of this "front-loading," the drama of the primary process has been effectively condensed into a few weeks, and the regional influence sought by the Southern states has been diminished. There were, in fact, more Southern states holding primaries on the following Tuesday, March 14. By mid-March, it was already apparent who the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates would be.

**Supreme Court** - The highest federal court, consisting of nine judges—the Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices. Justices are nominated by the President. Their nomination must be confirmed by the Senate. Justices are appointed for life. The Supreme Court is the highest federal court. It is an appellate court; that is, it reviews decisions made by lower courts. Its decisions are final and take precedence over those of all other judicial bodies. Decisions require a simple majority. In recent years, many decisions have been issued with a 5-4 vote. For certain decisions, the court issues a formal statement, or "opinion," explaining in detail the legal reasoning underlying the decision. A Justice who agrees with the majority's decision but not with the legal reasoning underlying it may write a "concurring opinion." A Justice who disagrees with the majority's decision may issue a "dissenting opinion."



**surplus** - The amount by which revenues, as from taxes, exceed outlays for government programs.

**swing voter** - A voter who is not strictly loyal to a particular political party. A swing voter may be an independent, one who is not affiliated with either of the two major parties, or may be, like a Reagan Democrat, one who does not vote for a party candidate under some circumstances. These voters "swing" from one party to the other, and by doing so, they may "swing" the outcome of an election. Although a sizable percentage of the electorate votes along strict party lines, there are many voters who make their decisions based upon the particular merits of each candidate or issue. The successful candidate for political office must run a campaign that appeals not only to the party loyalists, but to a significant number of voters among the independents and the swing groups of both parties.

## - T -

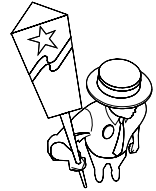
**term limits** - Limitations on the number of times that an individual may hold a particular political office. Term limits for members of Congress has been a topic of intermittent debate since the mid-1980s. The issue arose in the wake of several scandals that brought down a number of long-serving members of the House of Representatives. The issue arose again in the Congressional election campaign of 1994. Proponents of term limits argue that unlimited terms enable certain members of Congress to become "entrenched" in office. These "full-time politicians" acquire too much power, which, it is argued, they then have the potential to

abuse. Since 1951, Presidents of the U.S. have been subject to term limits. Presidents may now be elected to only two terms. This requirement was put into effect with the ratification of the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution.

**Territory** - A part of the United States that has its own legislature but does not have the status of a state and is under the administration of an appointed governor. Guam is a Territory of the U.S.

**third party** - A political party organized to compete against the two major parties in a two-party system; currently in the U.S., any party other than the Republican Party and the Democratic Party.

**threshold** - The minimum percentage of the popular vote that a presidential candidate of the Democratic Party must receive in order to qualify for the awarding of national party convention delegates in a primary under proportional representation. The Republican Party uses winner-take-all primaries, in which the plurality winner gains all of the state's delegates.



**ticket** - The list of candidates nominated by a political party in an election.

**ticket splitting** - The practice of voting for candidates of different political parties in the same election as opposed to voting for all candidates of a given party (a straight ticket). Independents are most likely to split their tickets because they are not attached to any single party.

## - U -

**unicameral legislature** - A legislature consisting of only one chamber, or house. Nebraska is the only state with such a legislature.

**U.S. Representative** - A member of the lower house of Congress (the House of Representatives).

**U.S. Senator** - A member of the upper house of Congress (the Senate).

## - V -

**veto** - The power of the President to refuse to sign a bill passed by Congress, preventing it from becoming law unless both houses override the veto by passing it again (with a two-thirds majority). A similar power is held by the governors of states. When Congress is in session, the President has ten days (not counting Sundays) in which to veto a bill or it becomes law without the President's signature. See also pocket veto.

**Vice President of the United States** - The elected officer in the U.S. government who acts as President of the Senate and succeeds to the Presidency in the event of the President's death, incapacity, or removal.

**voter turnout** - The number or percentage of voters who cast a vote in a given election. Voter turnout in the U.S. has been low in many recent elections, perhaps from a common belief that one person's vote does not make a difference, although some elections are so close that a few votes one way or the other could change the outcome. "Voter apathy" has been given as another reason for low voter turnout. Such apathy may be due to disapproval of candidates, parties, or policies.

**Voting Rights Act of 1965** - Act of Congress passed in 1965 empowering the federal government to enforce the voting rights of black citizens. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1870, states that the right 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." Still, the states have the power to establish requirements for voter eligibility, and in some states this power continued to be used in ways that made it difficult for blacks to vote. A dramatic march led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in March, 1965, brought national attention to the issue. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which banned the use of literacy tests and other tactics designed specifically to deny blacks their right to vote. The law also authorized the U.S. Attorney General to dispatch federal officials to oversee and verify the registration process.

## - W -

**war chest** - A fund for running a political campaign. A candidate's war chest is made up chiefly of political contributions acquired by personal or direct-mail solicitations and through various fundraising events. Some claim that candidates with the largest war chests are able to "buy" election victories. On the other hand, a number of presidential hopefuls have spent large sums of money on unsuccessful campaigns.

**ward** - A district or division of a city or town, for purposes of administration, representation, voting, etc. A ward is further divided into precincts.

wedge issue - A political issue that can be used to divide or polarize a group of voters.

**whip** - An officer of a political party, as in Congress, who maintains party discipline and enforces attendance. In each house of Congress, the majority whip assists the majority leader and the minority whip assists the minority leader by rounding up the party's Representatives and Senators before a vote and "whipping into shape" errant party members, so as to consolidate support for the party's agenda.

**winner-take-all** - In the simplest kind of election, the candidate who receives the most votes wins, or "takes all." Most elections, whether of government officials or in the private sector, are decided on a winner-take-all basis. The winner is the person who receives a **plurality** of at least one vote.

## - Y -

**yellow dog Democrat** - A loyal Democrat who votes along party lines without exception. The term derives from the saying, "I'd vote for a yellow dog if he ran on the Democratic ticket." In the 1928 presidential election campaign, yellow dog Democrats were Alabamans who remained loyal to the party even though they did not like the Democratic candidate, Al Smith. The expression came to be used of loyal Southern Democrats generally. Historically, the term has been a complimentary one. Given the deep divisions that existed between the Deep South and the Eastern establishment, even well into the twentieth century, one can begin to understand the virtue of remaining loyal to the party, no matter how distasteful a particular candidate might be. Many Democrats from all parts of the country still refer to themselves proudly as yellow dog Democrats.

*Adapted from <http://www.pbs.org/democracy/glossary/print.html>*