

Chapter Summary

Political Parties

Lesson 1 *History of Political Parties*

- The leaders who wrote the Constitution did not support the idea of political parties, fearing that divisions between parties would weaken the nation. However, by the late 1700s, two groups had formed to compete for political power. These groups had different ideas about the role of government.
- Alexander Hamilton and his followers formed the Federalist Party, which favored a strong national government.
- Thomas Jefferson and his followers formed the Democratic-Republican Party, which supported more power for the states.
- Parties formed and reformed in the early years, until the Democrats and the Republicans emerged as the major parties.
- Today the United States has a two-party political system. Third parties appear from time to time to promote specific issues or candidates, but a third-party candidate has never been elected to the presidency.
- In other countries, two-party systems are rare. Many democracies have three or more parties. Some nations, such as China, have one-party systems, which are not democratic.
- The main difference between the two major U.S. parties is their belief in how involved the government should be in the economy and in people's lives. Democrats tend to want government to regulate the economy and provide help for the poor. Republicans tend to want little government involvement.
- Every four years the parties hold conventions to select their presidential candidates and write their platforms.

Lesson 2 *Political Parties Today*

- Each party has a national committee that raises money for presidential campaigns and organizes the party's national convention.
- The national convention launches the party's presidential campaign and builds party unity.
- State committees work to elect party candidates to state offices and national offices.

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Lesson 2 *Political Parties Today Cont.*

- Precincts are the election districts in cities and towns.
- A local party organization that becomes so strong its candidates win year after year is called a political machine. Today, most people think this is harmful.
- Political parties select candidates for public office by means of primary elections and caucuses.
- There are two main forms of the direct primary: closed and open. In a closed primary, only party members may take part. In an open primary, any registered voter can vote.
- Political parties work to elect their candidates to office by raising money to pay for campaign appearances, ads, and party workers.
- Parties keep citizens informed through speeches, printed material, and ads. Parties also listen to what citizens say about issues.
- Political parties link the various levels and branches of government by helping their members work together to carry out the policies they support.
- When a political party is out of power, it acts as a watchdog, making sure that the party in power does not abuse its power.