Elections, Campaigns, Nominations, Oh My!!

The backbone of Democracy

A History of 3 elections

- 1800s-era of personal politics: candidates did not campaign personally, instead they were carried out through newspapers and in the state legislatures
  - Anyone actively campaigning went against the qualities of public service
- 1896-Nominating conventions used in full force, first active campaign by candidates and first solely focused on the economy
- 2000-election decided by courts, candidate image more important than platform, the highpoint of candidate centered politics

Purpose of elections

- Provide legitimacy for the system

- Provides a safety valve for discontent (John Locke)

- Allows citizens to exercise their influence and voice their concerns

- Promotes leadership accountability

- Allows government to control when, where, how and which citizens get to participate

Nomination

- Self-announce

- Petition

- Caucus/convention-caucus is a private meeting of party leaders; conventions began because they are more democratic, but today they are primarily media events with every moment staged and scripted to put party in the best light

Nominations

- Primaries
  - In 1968, the Democrats sought to change the candidate selection process requiring delegates be chosen by primary elections, caucuses or state conventions
    - Open primaries/closed primaries
  - Today, considerable weight is given to the early caucuses of Iowa and the New Hampshire
    - creates a front-runner status increasing their media exposure, contributions and potential nomination

Subject to revision

Presidential primaries/caucuses calendar 2008

Jan	14	Iowa
	19	Nevada, South Carolina (Republican)
	22	New Hampshire*, Wyoming (R)
	29	Florida, South Carolina (Democratic)
Feb	1	Maine (R)
	5	Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado (D), Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho (D), Illinois, Kansas (D), Michigan (R), Minnesota (R), Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico (D), New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia (R)
	7	Hawaii (R)
	9	District of Columbia (D)*, Kansas (R), Louisiana, Michigan (D), Nebraska (D), Washington (D)
	10	Maine (D)
	12	District of Columbia (R)*, Maryland, Virginia
	19	Hawaii (D), Washington (R), Wisconsin
	26	Arizona*
Mar	4	Massachusetts, Minnesota (D), Ohio*, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont
	8	Wyoming (D)
	11	Mississippi, Oregon*
	18	Colorado (R)*
Apr	22	Pennsylvania*
May	6	Indiana, North Carolina*, West Virginia (D)
	13	Nebraska(R)
	20	Kentucky
	27	Idaho (R)
Jun	3	Montana, New Mexico (R), South Dakota

Sources: National Conference of State Legislatures; AP *Considering changing date

Primaries

- Criticism of primaries
  - They don't represent the voting public with only 20% voter turnout
  - Money plays to big a role in winning them, especially the early primaries
  - Take up time, especially for incumbents
  - Undue influence on early primaries
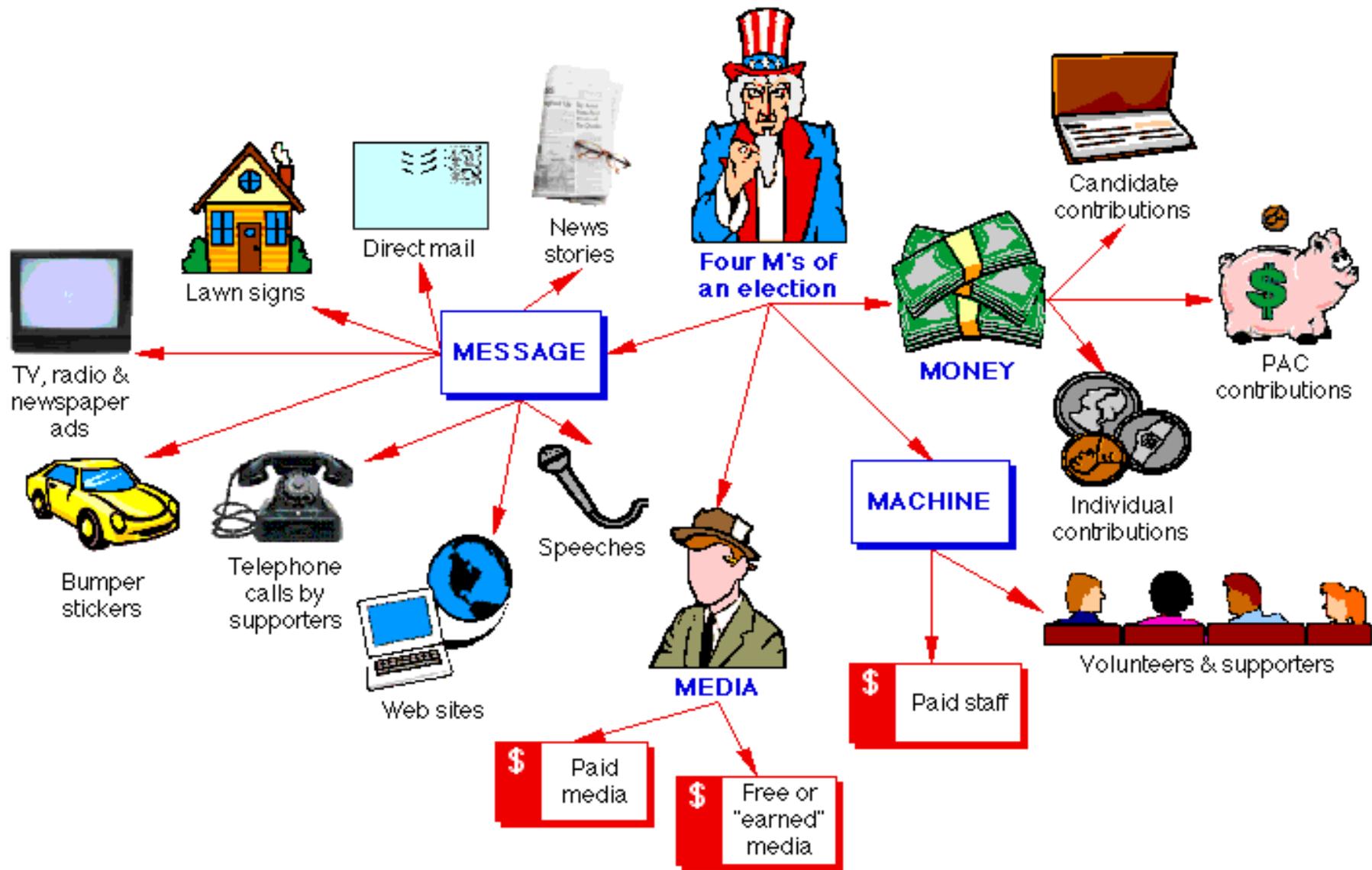 - Media has to much influence in picking the "front runner"

Why the Primaries?

- The McGovern-Fraser Commission after a disastrous 1968 Democratic convention

  - The Commission sought to broaden participation and better represent minorities through affirmative action policies

  - It required the delegate selection be open (no more boss systems)

  - As a result, most states adopted the primary (open and closed) instead of the party-run state caucus system

    - Republicans did the same since state laws apply to both parties

Unintended Consequences

- Too much democracy
  - Leaves decisions to an uninformed, unrepresented electorate (even though they don't vote)
- Doesn't represent people it was intended to
- The current system focuses not on selecting candidates who would win, but individuals that appeal to interest groups and the TV
  - Ideologically extreme candidates appeal to party based primary voters, not moderate general election voters
  - In other words, many times the least qualified, or unappealing candidate wins primaries

Lawn signs

Direct mail

News stories

Four M's of an election

Candidate contributions

TV, radio & newspaper ads

MESSAGE

MONEY

PAC contributions

Bumper stickers

Telephone calls by supporters

Speeches

Individual contributions

MACHINE

Web sites

MEDIA

Paid staff

Volunteers & supporters

Paid media

Free or "earned" media

National elections are media-driven, capital intensive campaigns relying on technology and communication

- Polling very important, allows candidates to know what issues to respond to and what groups to cultivate
- Broadcast Media-ads used to demonstrate a candidates message (image) and attack the opponent
  - Expensive-most primetime 30-second ads can cost $200,000
  - http://www.livingroomcandidate.org

- Phone banks
- Direct Mail
- Public relations consultants who help promote the candidate and develop their image through soundbites
- The Internet
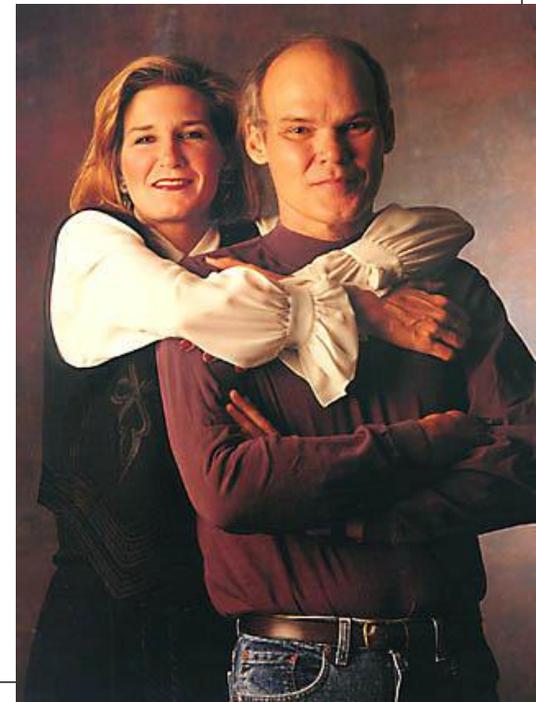
Money allows you to compete not win
(Perot spent $65 million---3rd place)
Obama and McCain spent $1 billion

- Sources
  - Small contributors, $5, $10 etc… less than 1% of population contribute over $200
  - Wealthy fatcats-money gives them access and a sense of political efficacy (60% of money, 5% of population)
  - Candidate personal spending
  - PACs (interest groups)

- Temporary organizations-527s http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtes.asp?level=C&cycle=2006
- Fund raisers
- Public funding-but many restrictions, therefore many candidates won't ask for it until the end of the campaign
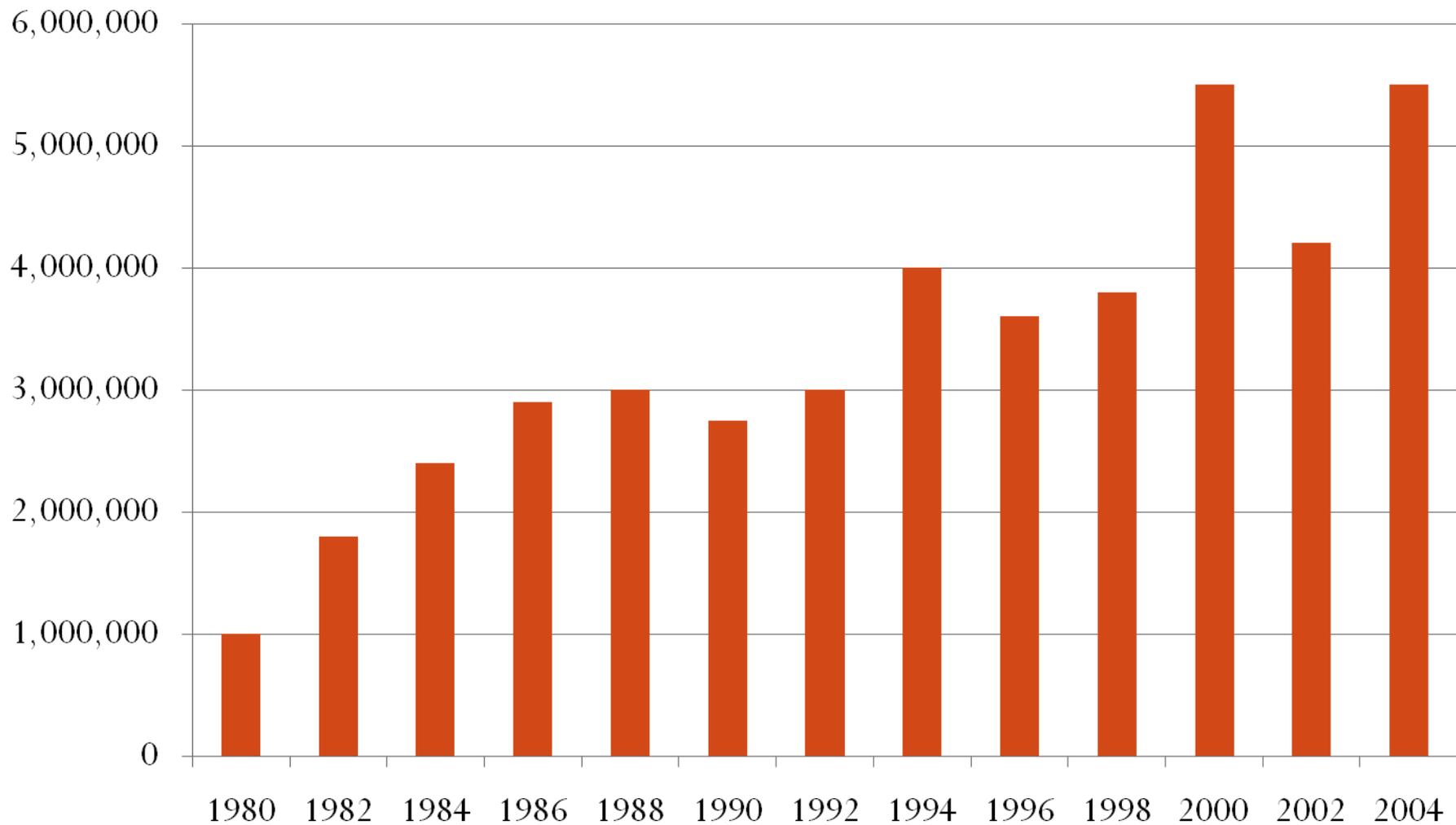- Purpose of money is to put the candidate's name in voters' minds

Average Expenditures of House Candidates, 1980-2006

Vital Statistics on Congress, 1999-2004, CQ Press
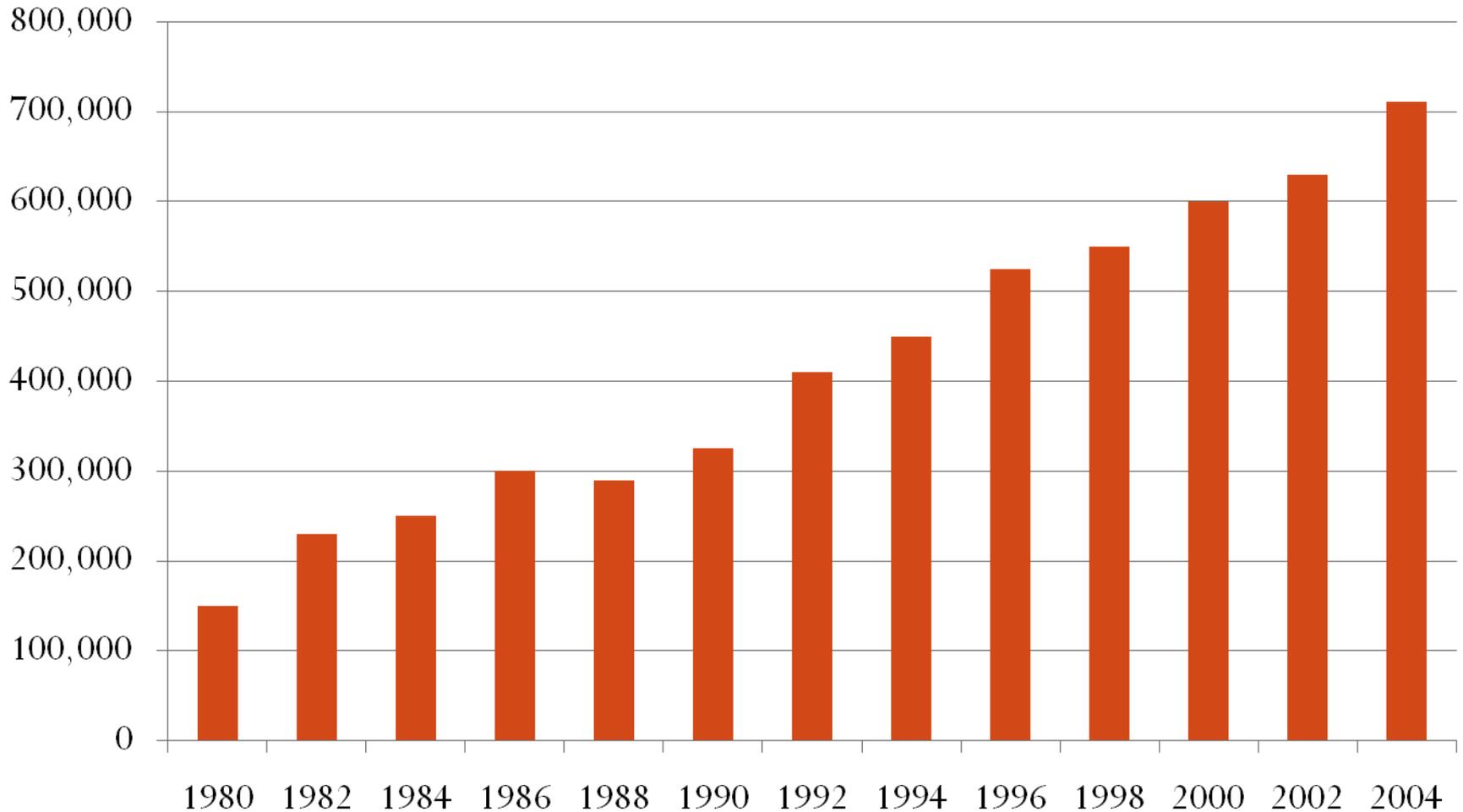
Average Campaign Expenditures by Senate Candidates, 1980-2006

Money also corrupts (see Nixon)

- In 1974, Congress passes the Federal Election Campaign Act which tightens reporting requirements for contributions and limits expenditures
  - An individual can not donate more than $1,000 in a single election and PACs have to give to at least 5 different campaigns and can give $5,000
  - Donations over $100 have to be disclosed
  - Independent groups can spend money on behalf of a candidate, but not on campaign
  - *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) the Court rules that some limits on contributions did not violate the 1st Amendment, but limits on individual spending did, unless they accept public money
  - (Mr. Moneybags)

Summary of Current Finance Laws

- Contributions by Individuals
  - Max $1,000/election to candidate
  - Max $5,000/year to party
  - Max $20,000/year to national
- Contributions by PACs
  - Max $5,000/election to candidates
  - Max $15,000/yr. to national party committee
- Soft Money
  - No limits on national party receipt of soft money, but parties must disclose such receipts
- Independent Expenditures
  - Cannot be made in cooperation or coordination with candidates

Reforms create loopholes

- Because of the FEC, PACs created to funnel large sums of money from corporations and groups to campaigns
- The FEC also limits "hard money" or direct contributions, but not "soft money", money for party building or voter registration, but how does one differentiate that money
- Independent spending by candidates bypasses normal electoral rules
- The development of 527s or nonprofit groups that can run ads attacking a candidate without specifically mentioning the candidate they support
- (Why would those who benefit from the loopholes want to change the system?)

Citizens United v. FEC (2009)

- The Court ruled 5-4 that the government can not ban political spending by corporations in elections because it violates the 1st Amendment

- The dissenters argued that it will allow corporate money to flood the election marketplace and corrupt democracy
  - The decision in effect allows for "a new stampede of special interest money" in our politics
    - Super-PACS---can raise unlimited money from corporations, unions, associations, and individuals, but can't donate directly to an individual campaign.
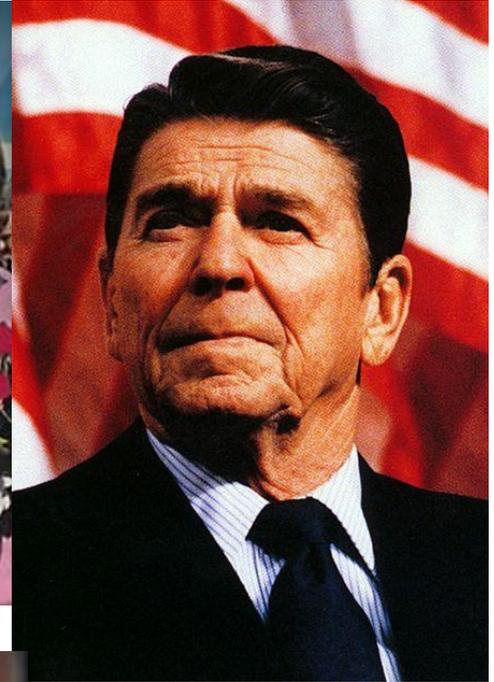
How People Vote?

- Party Identification
    - Most voters tend to identify with one party or another, typically as a socializing process passed down from their parents.
    - Today, party identification is not as big a predictor in national election as it is in local election
    - Candidate-centered politics, a result of more technology and television coverage, has allowed voters to evaluate more easily the candidates, making party membership less relevant
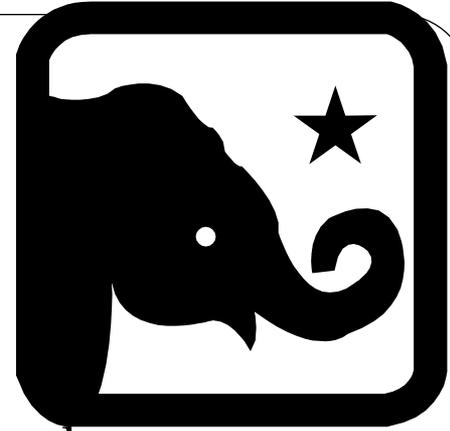
How People Vote?

- Candidate Characteristics
  - Race, gender, religion, ethnicity, geography and social background help voters choose someone like them
  - In addition, voters want a candidate that appears to be decisive (no flip-floppers), honest, vigorous (JFK), competent (incumbents are hard to beat), and have integrity

How People Vote?

- Policies and Issues
  - Most voters will pick candidates who take stands on issues that are closest to their own
  - Unfortunately, most candidates will tend to cloud their views on controversial issues with rhetoric, making it difficult for the voter to decide and requires them to be well-informed
  - Today's primary system, however, does require candidate to take stands on many issues in order to appeal to primary voters
  - If voters are unsure, they decide based on retrospective (What have you done for me lately?), or prospective voting (What are you going to do for me?)

The Constitutional Basis for Presidential Elections
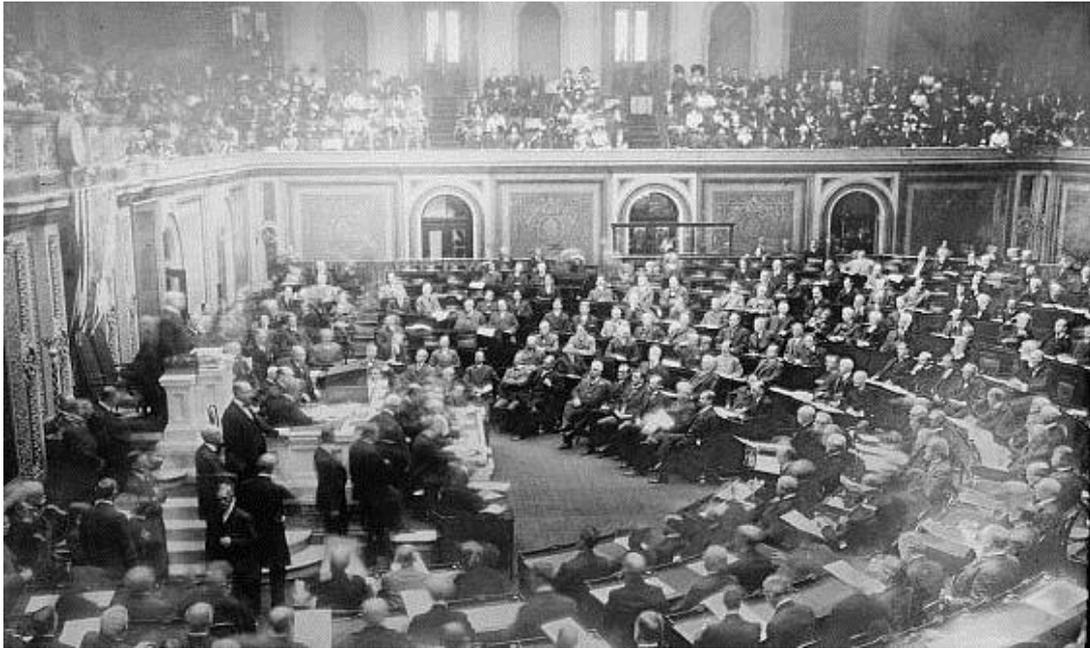
Verifying the Electoral College vote in the House of Representatives, 1913

- The Constitution's Framers doubted the public's ability to directly elect its leaders
- Article II: Electors from each state vote directly for president
- 1804: The 12th Amendment changed the electoral process to a presidential/vice-presidential ticket

Finally, the Electoral College

Why it stays

- It is efficient and cheaper to ignore less populated areas; campaigning in every state would make costs soar astronomically

- Any change requires a Constitution Amendment and the large states would not be willing to give up their dominance and control

- Intended to keep "demi-gods" from being elected

Objections

- Today's voters are informed enough to allow people to vote

- Popular vote winner may lose electoral vote (1824, 1876, 1888, 2000)

- Highly populated states dominate the system (a candidate can win the 270 needed by carrying only 10 states) and states controlled by one party causes votes for the lesser party seem meaningless