Al Gore won the popular vote by 539,947 votes in 2000, or only slightly more than 180 votes per county.

In the election of 2000, you could truthfully say that every vote counted.

In the US, citizens vote more often and for more offices than citizens of any other democracy.

Half a million persons hold elected state and local offices.

There are 4 problems with election rules:

1. The lack of competition for some offices.
2. The complexities of nominating presidential candidates
3. The distortions of the electoral college
4. The influence of money in our elections

CHART PG. 216- IMPORTANT FACTORS IN WINNING ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS: THE RULES OF THE GAME

Most electoral rules remain matters of state law.

Regularly Scheduled Elections

Elections are held at fixed intervals that cannot be changed by the party in power.

Elections for members of Congress occur on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years.

Participants always know in advance when the next election will be, and can plan accordingly.

Fixed, Staggered and Sometimes Limited Terms

Fixed terms- the length of term in office is specified, not indefinite in the US
House of Reps- 2 years, Senate- 6 years, Pres.- 4 years
Staggered Terms- not all offices are up for election at the same time. In the US, the House members are up for election every two years, but only 1/3 of Senators are up for election at the same time.
Senators can run for the presidency without fear of losing their seat because of this cycle.

Term Limits

The 22nd Amendment, in 1951, limited Presidents to two terms.

Lame Duck- a politician who cannot, or has announced they will not run again.

15 states have enacted term limits on their state legislatures.

3/4 of all voters favors term limits.

Supreme Court declared, by a vote of 5-4 tat a state does not have the constitutional power to impose limits on the number of terms for which its members of the US Congress are eligible.
Winner Take All
- Winner Take All System - an election system in which the candidate with the most votes wins. The winner does not need a majority, but only a plurality.
- Single-Member Districts - an electoral district in which voters choose one representative or official. When used, minor parties find it harder to win.
- Proportional Representation - system in which political parties secure legislative seats and power in proportion to the number of votes they receive in the election. It rewards minor parties and permits them to participate in government.

The Electoral College
- We elect our president and vice president not by a national vote, but by an indirect device known as the Electoral College.
- The framers of the Constitution set it up this way because they did not trust the choice of president to a direct vote of the people.
- Each state has as many electors as it has representatives and senators.
- Each state legislature is free to determine how its electors are selected.
- Electors are expected to cast their electoral votes for the party’s candidates for president and vice-president.
- “Faithless Elector” - an elector who does not vote for his or her state’s popular vote winner - has never happened.
- 12th Amendment requires electors to vote separately for president and vice president.
- Candidates who win a plurality of the popular vote in a state secure all that state’s electoral votes.
- Electors go to their state capital on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December to cast their ballots.
- It takes a majority of the electoral votes to win. If no candidate gets a majority the House chooses among the top three candidates, with each state delegation having one vote.
- The House has decided twice in history - in 1800, before the 12th amendment they decided a tie between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr and in 1824 choosing John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson and William Crawford.
- Al Gore won the popular vote in 2000 by over 500,000 votes, but lost the Electoral College 271 to 266.
- Concern about the Electoral College is renewed every time there is a serious third-party candidate for president.
- Which Congress casts the vote in the case of a tie - the new one elected in January, not the one in place in November when the vote took place.
- Would it be possible to have a president of one party and a v-p of another? Yes - p. 219

LOOK AT ELECTORAL MAP IN FRONT COVER

RUNNING FOR CONGRESS
- Most congressional elections are not close. There is often little competition.
- Safe Seats - an elected to office that is predictably won by one party or the other, so the success of that party’s candidate is almost taken for granted.
Competition is more likely when funding is adequate for both candidates. Presidential popularity affects both House and Senate elections.

- **Coattail Effect** - the boost that candidates may get in an election because of the popularity of candidates above them on the ballot, especially the president.
- In midterm elections, presidential popularity and economic conditions have long been associated with the number of House seats a president’s party loses.
- In all of the midterm elections between 1934 and 1998 - the party controlling the White House lost seats in the house.
- When presidential landslides occur, the victorious party is especially vulnerable and likely to lose seats in the next midterm election.

**THE House Of Representatives**

- Candidates must first plan a primary race, unless they face no opponents for their party nomination.
- Every two years, there are as many as 1,000 candidates for the House seats.

**Mounting a Primary Campaign**

- First step is to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars and sometimes more to mount a serious campaign.
- The party organization usually stays neutral until the nomination is decided.
- **Personal Organization** - the candidate must build up their organization while holding another job, helping others, and gaining public visibility. They rely on personal contacts at this point.

**Campaigning for the General Election**

- Most incumbent members of Congress win reelection.
- Since 1970, 95% of incumbent House members seeking reelection have won.
- Incumbents outspent their challengers roughly 3-1.
- Serious challengers in House races are hard to find - many are scared away financially or by the public pressures.
- A few challengers mount serious campaigns because of a desire to serve and to influence public policy.
- Incumbents have a host of advantages to help them like franking privileges, free use of broadcast studios, a large staff to perform countless favors for constituents.
- Turnover in the House only come when incumbents die, decide to retire, or seek some other office.
- **Redistricting** - happens once each decade after the census often promotes some turnover as in 2002.
- **Open Seats** - seats in the House in which can result in more competitive elections because of redistricting.
The Senate
♦ Incumbency is an advantage for senators, although not as much as for representatives-they have state-of-the-art campaign techniques and a campaign usually costs well into the millions.
♦ Interest groups and parties direct more money to competitive races in small cities where the stakes for control of the Senate are high.

RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT
♦ The formal campaign has 3 stages: winning the nomination, campaigning at the convention, and mobilizing support in the general election.

The Nomination
♦ The first step is when to start campaigning. Early decisions are increasingly necessary for candidates to raise the money and assemble an organization.
♦ One of the hardest jobs is to calculate how to deal with the complex maze of presidential primaries and caucuses that constitutes the delegate selection system.
♦ The presidential campaign finance system provides funds to match small individual contributions for candidates who agree to remain within spending limitations.

Presidential Primaries
♦ State presidential primaries have become the main method of choosing delegates to the national convention.
♦ 3/4 of the states use presidential primaries today.
♦ Presidential primaries often have 2 features: a beauty contest- or popularity vote, where voters indicate which candidate they prefer but do not actually elect delegates to the convention, and actual voting- for delegates pledged to a candidate.
♦ Proportional Representation- delegates to the national convention are allocated on the basis of the votes candidates win in the beauty contest. Democrats mandate this type in all states, Republicans vary from state to state.
♦ Winner Take All- whoever3r gets the most votes wins all that state’s delegates-enormous advantage in large states like California.
♦ Delegate Selection- voters choose delegates who may or may not have pledged how they will vote in the national party convention. Delegates are free to exercise their independent judgement at the convention- not widely used- only used by Republicans and only in New York and Illinois in 2000 election.
♦ Delegate Selection & Separate Presidential Poll- in several states voters choose twice-once to indicate their choice for president and again to choose delegates pledges to a presidential candidate.
♦ There has been a tendency for more and more states to move their primaries up-“Front loading” so that their primary is held earlier on in the race and is of more significance.

Caucuses & Conventions
♦ Caucus- a meeting of party members and supporters of various candidates. It is the oldest method of choosing delegates and centers on party organization.
Delegates who will attend the national party conventions are chosen by delegates to state or district conventions and this process starts at local meetings open to all party members.

Presidential hopefuls face a dilemma: to get the Republican nomination, you have to appeal to the more intensely conservative Republican partisans or those that vote in the primaries.

Democratic hopefuls have to appeal to the liberal wing of their party as well as minorities.

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**Continuing Problems With Campaign Finance**

- The continuing problems with federal election fund raising are easy to identify: dramatically escalating costs, a growing dependence on PAC money, decreasing visibility and competitiveness of challengers, and the ability of wealthy individuals to fund their own campaigns.

**Rising Costs of Campaigns**

- The American ideal that anyone can run for public office has become more a myth than a reality.
- Rising costs mean that incumbents spend more time raising funds and therefore less time legislating and representing their districts.

**Declining Competition**

- Unless something is done to help finance challengers, incumbents will continue to have the advantage in seeking reelection.
- The high cost of campaigns dampens competition by discouraging individuals from running for office.
- Unlike incumbents, most challengers have to support themselves and their families throughout the campaign, which for a seat in Congress lasts roughly two years.

**Increasing dependence on PACs and Wealthy Donors**

- In 2000, 191 of 408 incumbents seeking reelection raised more money from PACs than from individuals.
- Senators get a smaller percentage of their campaign funds from PACs but because they spend so much more, they need to raise even more from PACs than House members do.
- It takes less time to raise money from PACs than from individuals- each PAC can give $10,000, each individual only $4,000

**IMPROVING ELECTIONS**

- Reformers agree the current process is flawed but disagree over which aspects require change.
Concern over how we choose presidents now centers on four issues:

1. The number, timing, and representativeness of presidential primaries.
2. The role of the electoral college, including the possibility that a presidential election might be thrown into the H.O.R.
3. How we vote
4. How we fund presidential elections

Reforming Presidential Primaries

- The media plays up the primaries in every state, and allows people to judge political qualities: their abilities to organize campaigns, communicate through the media, avoid mistakes.
- Supporters claim that primaries test candidates on the very qualities they must exhibit in the presidency.
- Critics grant that more voters take part in primaries than in the caucus and convention methods of choosing delegates, but they question the quality of the participation.
- They argue that supporters of the candidates have no opportunity to deliberate together in public.
- Voters in primaries tend to be more influenced by candidates’ personalities and media skills than their position on vital issues.
- Some critics argue that primary season lasts too long, and some states hold their primaries earlier than others, giving them more advantage.

Reforming the Nominating Process

- Some argue in favor of a national presidential primary that would take the form of a single nationwide election, probably held in September or May, or separate state primaries held in all states on the same day.
- Supporters say a one-shot national primary would be simple, direct, and representative. It would cut down on wear and tear of candidates, attract larger turnouts.
- Critics argue it would make the present system seem even worse, would enhance the role of showmanship and be enormously expensive- an unfair advantage to the candidates without large financial backing.
- A more modest proposal is a regional primary, possibly a 2 or 3-week intervals across the country- they would bring more coherence to the process and encourage more emphasis on issues of regional concern. Such primaries would have most of the disadvantages of the current system, especially on money and media.
- Another proposal is to drastically reduce the number of primaries and hold more state caucuses- by centering delegate selection in party meetings, the caucus system would enhance the role of the party, increase voter turnout.
- Still another idea- used by Colorado & Utah, is to have local caucuses in May and then state conventions in every state in the summer to select 2-3 candidates to compete in a national primary to be held in September.
Reforming the Electoral College

- Most frequent reform is to switch to direct popular election of the president, especially after the 2000 election.
- Such a proposal usually provides that if no candidate receives at least 40% of the popular vote, a runoff election is held between the top 2 contenders with the most votes.
- Direct election would give every voter the same weight in voting for president—winners would have more legitimacy because their victories would reflect the will of the voters.
- Opponents argue that the plan would further undermine federalism, encourage unrestrained majority rule and political extremism and hurt smaller states, which would lose some of their present influence. Others think it would make presidential campaigns more remote from the voters.
- National Bonus Plan—another alternative that adds the current 538 electoral college members to another 102 electoral votes, to be awarded on a winner take all basis to the candidate with the most votes, so long as the candidate received more than 40% of the popular vote. It would avoid elections being thrown into the House of Reps and would help the popular vote winner take over the White House.

Reforming How We Vote

- Election administration is a state and local matter, and election law is constitutionally assigned to the individual states.
- After the 2000 election, Florida enacted laws to modernize their voting: certification of electronic voting machines and requirements for the use and storage of them, yet they still had problems in the next election.
- Congress passed legislation providing $3.9 billion to modernize how we vote.
- Some new ideas: e-voting, or Oregon vote-by-mail.