



American Government  
**POLITICAL  
PARTIES**

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# Introduction

The United States Constitution is over 225 years old. It says nothing about **politics**. Not a word about political parties. Why? It didn't have to. People knew who the first president would be. It was a fact. George Washington. No political parties needed. Everyone got along. Or did they? Then Washington retired ...

Leaders were ready to fight. Would people like the Constitution? Some wanted a strong central government. Others wanted the states to lead. The groups were called factions. Political parties were born.

What is a political party? A political party is a group of people. They have the same ideas. People work together to win elections. They want to control the government. Why? So their ideas can be put into action. There are two main parties. The Democratic Party. The Republican Party. They compete for power. Each wants to win. Parties help us know what **candidates** stand for. Some say they make it easier to vote.






There have been six party systems. What's that? A label. It describes the history of American politics. One party dominated each of the six eras. Party ideas change over time. Things happen to alter people's thinking. People switch parties.

**1.** 1790s–1820s. Federalists vs. Democratic-Republicans. 1796 was an election year. John Adams vs. Thomas Jefferson. Adams won. He became president. Four years passed. Time for another election. People gave speeches. The **campaign** was ugly. Each side insulted the other. Jefferson won. His party ruled. Adams's party faded away. The Federalists were gone. Only one party was left.


**2.** 1820s–1850s. Democrats vs. Whigs. Jefferson's party split. There were many groups. The Democrats was one. Another was the Whigs. Four men ran for president



in 1824. It was a big mess. There was a tie. Congress had to decide. John Quincy Adams was named president. Andrew Jackson won in 1828. People called him a king. Party members met. Meetings were called **conventions**. Campaigns used sayings. Called **slogans**. They were catchy. But war was coming.

**3.** 1850s–1890s. Democrats vs. Republicans. Many did not like slavery. It ended the Whig Party. The Republican Party was born. Abraham Lincoln was its candidate. He became president. The country went to war. 750,000 men died. Slavery ended. The South was rebuilt. It was expensive. And it took time. People lost interest. Republicans left the South. **Jim Crow** laws were passed. They were unfair to people of color. The country grew. People emigrated, 25 million of them.

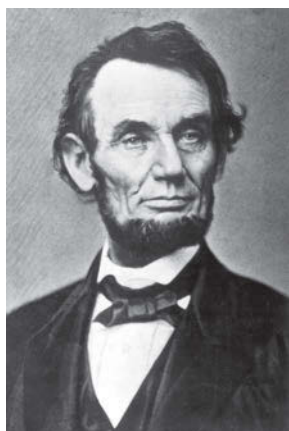




**4.** 1890s–1930s. Democrats vs. Republicans. Republicans were pro-business. They won elections. No Democrat won until 1912. Third parties formed. They rarely won elections. But Americans liked some of their ideas. The two main parties liked them too. They adopted them. Working conditions improved. Child labor laws were passed. Women got the right to vote.

**5.** 1932–1968. Democrats vs. Republicans. The stock market crashed. Workers lost their jobs. Shops closed. Banks failed. Democrats won in 1932. Franklin D. Roosevelt became president. He had plans to help. It was called the New Deal. The government grew. It spent money. Other presidents followed. The War on Poverty. The Great Society. Those were Democratic programs. They cost trillions.

**6.** 1968–now. Democrats vs. Republicans.  
Split government. Nobody agrees. Working together is not easy. Are we in a new era? Some say yes. Others say no. It happened in 1968. The South voted Republican. The Midwest too. Republicans today don't want too much government. Democrats like social programs. Who will win on the next Election Day?



*A house divided against  
itself cannot stand.*

**—Abraham Lincoln**



CAMPAIGN SLOGANS	
William Henry Harrison, 1840	Tippecanoe and Tyler Too
Abraham Lincoln, 1864	Don't Swap Horses in the Middle of the Stream
Calvin Coolidge, 1924	Keep Cool with Coolidge
Herbert Hoover, 1928	A Chicken in Every Pot and a Car in Every Garage
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932	Happy Days Are Here Again
Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953	I Like Ike
Jimmy Carter, 1976	Not Just Peanuts
Ronald Reagan, 1984	It's Morning Again in America







## Chapter 1

# FAMILY FEUD

Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft were good friends. They belonged to the same political party. A political party is a group of people. They have the same ideas. Working together, they win elections.

Both Taft and Roosevelt were Republicans. Roosevelt was the U.S. president. In 1904, he picked Taft to be secretary of war. Taft was loyal to Roosevelt. He supported Roosevelt's ideas. Roosevelt left office in 1909. Voters picked Taft as president. Roosevelt was happy. He thought Taft would continue his **policies**.





Theodore Roosevelt

Roosevelt was all smiles when he left the White House. He went hunting in Africa. The former president said he would never return to politics. Roosevelt came

back from Africa. He saw Taft ignoring all he had done. Roosevelt felt let down. He wanted Taft out of office.

Roosevelt took on his one-time friend. He wanted to be the Republican choice for president in 1912. One of them would face-off with a Democrat on Election Day. His name was Woodrow Wilson. He was a member of the Democratic Party. Wilson was the governor of New Jersey.

**Think About It:** *Does America need political parties?*



## [ CRAZY CONVENTION ]

Roosevelt and Taft were loyal to their party. They each asked for the party's support. Republican Party members met in Chicago. Members were called delegates. They held a convention. It was to pick the party's candidate for president. Some wanted Taft. Others wanted Roosevelt.

Party members yelled. They fought. The party was split. Taft or Roosevelt? Roosevelt or Taft? In the end, the delegates picked Taft. Roosevelt was angry. He and his followers stormed out of the meeting. They left the Republican Party. A new party



*Symbol of Progressive Party*

was formed. It was called the Progressive Party. The newspapers called it the Bull Moose Party. Roosevelt once said he was as strong as a bull moose.

## [ THE RACE WAS ON ]

The race for president was on. It was a three-way contest. Taft against Roosevelt. Both against Wilson. A Republican battling a Progressive. Both wanted to win over a Democrat.

All three parties had ideas. The Republicans wanted to tax imports. Goods coming into the U.S. would be taxed. The Democrats thought states should have more power. The federal government should have less power. The Progressives wanted women to vote. They could not at the time. The party also wanted workers to earn a minimum wage.

Roosevelt's friends were mad at the two main parties. They didn't like that the parties were afraid of change.

The new party's leaders had good ideas. They thought the other parties had ignored important issues. Those parties weren't looking out for the people. "They have become the tools of corrupt interests," the Progressives said.

## [ FATHEADS AND RADICALS ]

The election was rough. Roosevelt called Taft names. He said Taft was a "fathead with the brains of a guinea pig." Taft said Roosevelt and his friends were "radicals." The Democrats were happy. Voters usually choose



*Theodore Roosevelt campaigning*