



PRINCIPLE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Vocabulary Set 5

Name:

Campaigns and the Media

Section:

Campaigns and Elections

Winner-take-all system – An election system in which the candidate with the most votes wins.

Single-member district – An electoral district in which voters choose one representative or official.

Proportional representation – Election system in which each party running receives the proportion of legislative seats corresponding to its proportion of the vote.

Electoral college – Electoral system used in electing the president and vice president, in which voters vote for electors pledged to cast their ballots for particular party's candidates.

Safe seat – Elected office that is predictably won by one party or the other, so the success of the party's candidate is almost taken for granted.

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.

Candidate appeal – The tendency in elections to focus on the personal attributes of a candidate, such as his/her strengths, weaknesses, background, experience, and visibility.

National tide – The inclination to focus on national issues, rather than local issues, in an election campaign. The impact of the national tide can be reduced by the nature of the candidates on the ballot who might have differentiated themselves from their party or its leader if the tide is negative, as well as competition in the election.

Name recognition – Incumbents have an advantage over challengers in election campaigns because voters are more familiar with them, and incumbents are more recognizable.

Caucus – A meeting of local party members to choose party officials or candidates for public office and to decide the platform.

National party convention – A national meeting of delegates elected at primaries, caucuses, or state conventions who assemble once every four years to nominate candidates for president and vice president, ratify the party platform, elect officers, and adopt rules.

Interested money – Financial contributions by individuals or groups in the hope of influencing the outcome of the election and subsequently influencing policy.

Federal Election Commission (FEC) - A commission created by the 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act to administer election reform laws. It consists of six commissioners appointed by president and confirmed by the Senate. Its duties include overseeing disclosure of campaign finance information and public funding of presidential elections, and enforcing contribution limits.

Soft money – Contributions to a state or local party for party-building purposes.

Hard money – Donations made to political candidates, party committees, or groups which, by law, are limited and must be declared.

Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) – Largely banned party soft money, restored a long-standing prohibition on corporations and labor unions for using general treasury funds for electoral purposes, and narrowed the definition of issue advocacy.

Issue advocacy – Promoting a particular position or an issue paid for by interest groups or individuals but not candidates. Much issue advocacy is often electioneering for or against a candidate, and until 2004 had not been subject to any regulation.

527 organizations – Interest groups organized under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code may advertise for or against candidates. If their source of funding is corporations or unions, they have some restrictions on broadcast advertising. 527 organizations were important in recent elections.

Independent expenditures – Money spent by individuals or groups not associated with candidates to elect or defeat candidates for office.

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The Media and American Politics

Mass media – Means of communication that are reaching the public, including newspapers and magazines, radio, television (broadcast, cable, and satellite), films, recordings, books, and electronic communication.

News media – Media that emphasize the news.

Issue advocacy – Promoting a particular position or an issue by interest groups or individuals but not candidates. Much issue advocacy is often electioneering for or against a candidate and, until 2004 had not been subject to regulation.

Political socialization – The process by which we develop our political attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Selective exposure – The process by which individuals screen out messages that do not conform to their own biases.

Selected perception – The process by which individuals perceive what they want to in media messages.

Horse race – A close contest; by extension, any contest in which the focus is on who is ahead and by how much rather than on substantive differences between the candidates.

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