

The Election Process

- US has more elections than any other nation
- Are too many detrimental?
 - Do not protect minority rights
 - Decisions based on emotion, not reason
 - Short-term interests over long-term
- Major purposes of elections
 - Mechanism for selecting leaders; set public policy.
 - Check on public officials
 - Legitimizes exercise of political power
- Framers & elections
 - Elections ensure gov't interest same as people
 - Avoids direct democracy
 - Created a “Republic” - not a “Democracy”
- Right to Vote
 - Original Constitution - left it to the states

- 15th Amend (1870) – No restrictions based on race
- 19th Amend (1919) – No restrictions based on gender
- 26th Amend (1971) - lower voting age to 18
- 15th Amend had little impact until 1960s
 - States limited voting rights
 - Established:
 - SCOTUS upholds literacy tests & poll tax
 - SCOTUS nullifies grandfather clauses
 - Voting Rights Act (1965)
 - SCOTUS upholds Voting Rights Act in 1966
 - Today
- Principle = 1 person, 1 vote
 - Maintained by census every 10 yrs – Art I, Sec 2, Cl 3
 - “Reapportionment”
 - Gerrymandering

- SCOTUS stays out of reapportionment until 1962
- Elections (Types)
 - Types
 - Primaries not in Constitution
 - Primaries select candidate in all elections except Pres
- Presidential Elections
 - “Marathons”
 - Art II, Sec 1, Cl 5 = Natural born citizen, 35+; 14 yr res
 - 22nd Amend (1951) – 2 term limit
 - Electoral College
 - Stages
- Congressional elections
 - Every 2 yrs = entire House; 1/3 Senate
 - Held independently in each state & congressional district
 - Every 4 yrs, congressional election coincides w/ Presidential election (ex. 2012)

- Mid-term elections (off year; ex. 2014) = referendum on 1st half of president's term

- 1955-1992

- 1994

- 1994 = exception, not rule

- State & local elections
 - Since 2000, ~2.5 million elections

 - Gov & Lt gov, state legislatures, judges, state cabinet officials, city/county councils, mayors and county executives, school boards, district attorneys & yes dogcatchers!!!

 - State election laws & procedures vary

 - Turnout in state/local elections lower than national

 - States time elections to coincide with federal elections

 - Campaigns are often won or lost on the basis of personal reputations, campaign organization, fund-raising, and one-on-one politicking

 - Statewide races resemble national elections

 - Initiatives, Referenda, and Recall