

Political Parties & Interest groups

- Political parties
 - Parties defined
 - Different from interest groups
 - Framers' view in general
 - Equated w/ factions
 - Viewed negatively
 - NOTE: Framers division NOT partisan
 - Modern political parties created early 1800s
 - Substitute for factional warfare
 - At best:
 - At worst:
 - Framers' view
 - Party Systems
 - Systems vary
 - Characteristics
 - Dynamics depend
 - Ex. winner-take-all system vs. proportional representation
 - Cultural factors
 - Parties not essential to republic
 - American Party System
 - Parties in US

- Traditionally = Two-party system
 - Since 1850s - Republicans & Democrats
- Why two parties?
 - Two factors:
- Third Parties?
 - Often raise important issues
 - » Ex. Republican Party
 - Often achieve most with merger
 - » Ex. Progressive party (aka Bull Moose party)
 - Act as spoilers
 - » Ex. TR, Perot, Nader, Stein, Jorgenson
- Weakness of American Political Parties
 - Two principal factors:
 - Parties = decentralized, broad coalitions
 - Parties must be open
 - Traditionally = “middle of road”
 - Rise of independents
- Party structure
 - GOP & Dems = similar
 - National Conventions
 - » Pick POTUS & VPOTUS candidates
 - » Adopt platforms

» Sets operational rules

- DNC & RNC
- National chairs
- Committees=major operations

- Party Activities

- Nomination of candidates
- Fund raising Attracting & keeping voter loyalty
- Research & strategy
- Media Relations

- Interest Groups

- Defined
- Framers

- Different groups = different interests

- Pursuit = liberty
- BUT - two critical issues

- Ex. Federalist #10

- Danger of factions
- Can't prevent – so “check”
- Key assumption = “public interest”
- Madison naïve?

» Interest groups exercise disproportionate power

» Pursue own interests

- » Spend \$\$\$\$\$
- » Align w/ politicians & agencies
- » Small factions as dangerous as large
- » Ex. loopholes in tax code; “pork barrel”
- Govt’s role = protect from large & small interests
 - Echo’s of Madison = Conservative & Liberal views
- Types of Interest Groups
 - Profit Sector Groups
 - Nonprofit and Public Sector Groups
 - Mixed Sector Groups
 - Citizens’ Groups
 - Civil Rights Groups
 - Consumer Organizations
- What Do Interest Groups Do?
 - Power of Information
 - Lobbying Legislature & Executive
 - Insider lobbying vs. Outsider activities
 - Participation in decision-making process
 - Form coalitions
 - Going to Court
 - Money & PACs
 - Political Action Committees

- “Campaign finance reform”
 - “Soft Money”
 - 527 organization
 - *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010)
 - Result = Super-PACs
- Power to Protest