

## Outline Nominations and Campaigns

### Nominations and Campaigns

## Chapter Summary

### I. The Nomination Game (266-277)

#### A. Introduction

A nomination is a party's official endorsement of a candidate for office. Success in the nomination game requires money, media attention, and momentum. These elements are manipulated through a campaign strategy.

#### B. Deciding to Run

Campaigns are more taxing than ever. They seem endless, usually requiring at least a full year before the election for presidential candidates. Those who aspire to the presidency need an electoral base from which to begin. The offices of U.S. senator, U.S. representative, and state governor have been the most common electoral bases from which to run for president.

Becomes a lifestyle, almost an endless process. " The question is not whether I can get elected. The question is whether I can be elected and not be nuts when I get there"  
Walter Mondale

#### C. Competing for Delegates

Goal of the nomination game is to win the majority of delegates' votes at the national party convention.

State parties choose their delegates either through caucuses or primaries.

**Caucuses** consist of a meeting of state party leaders to choose delegates. At one time, party bosses ran caucuses. Today, caucuses are more open and adhere to strict complex rules of representation. Caucuses usually are organized like a pyramid, starting at the neighborhood, precinct-level and ending at the state convention where delegates are finally chosen to go to the national convention.

**Most delegates today are selected in presidential primaries**, in which voters in a state go to the polls and vote for a candidate. Presidential primaries are a product of turn-of-the-century reformers. As a result of the 1968 Democratic Party Convention and the McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms, many states switched to primaries in order to ensure a more representative group of delegates.

**Superdelegates**, composed of officeholders and party leaders, were added later. The proliferation of presidential primaries has transformed American politics. **The first primary is held in New Hampshire.** Many states have moved their primary earlier in

the season (**frontloading**) to capitalize on media attention. State legislatures and state parties make laws determining the way in which the primaries are set up and the delegates are allocated. Primaries serve as elimination contests and are proving grounds for candidates.

Critics of the primary and caucus system cite the following:

- 1) disproportionate attention goes to the early caucuses and primaries,
- 2) prominent politicians find it difficult to take time out from their duties to run,
- 3) money plays too big a role in the caucuses and primaries, states that vote late in the process are often irrelevant,
- 4) participation in the primaries and caucuses is low and unrepresentative,
- 5) the system gives too much power to the media. The present system has powerful defenders, most notably the candidates themselves.

#### D. The Convention Send-off

Party conventions used to provide great drama in American politics when the outcome was often in doubt. With the advent of presidential primaries, the drama has been reduced, although television has shown us some dramatic convention events. Today, most of the drama is gone. The parties have learned that high drama is not in their best interest. The networks have also scaled back their coverage. The purpose of conventions today is to orchestrate a massive send-off for the candidates, develop the parties' policy positions through the party platform, and promote political representation.

## II. The Campaign Game (277-281)

### A. The High-Tech Media Campaign

Technology has made it possible for candidates to speak directly to the American people in the comfort of their living rooms, or in front of their computer monitors. The most important use of computer technology in campaigns has been the use of targeted mailings to prospective supporters (direct mail). T

he most important goal of any media campaign is simply to get attention. Media coverage is determined by advertising and free attention as newsmakers. About half the total budget for a presidential or senatorial campaign is used for television advertising. Research has shown that campaign advertising can be a source of information about issues as well as about images. Getting positions across to voters is as important as persuading them that a candidate is honest, competent, and able to lead. The news media largely determine for themselves what is happening in a campaign. They tend to focus more on the campaign itself and less on policy issues.

### B. Organizing the Campaign

To effectively organize their campaigns candidates must do the following: line up a

campaign manager, get a fund raiser, get a campaign counsel, hire media and campaign consultants, assemble a campaign staff, plan the logistics, get a research staff and policy advisors, hire a pollster, and get a good press secretary.

### III. Money and Campaigning (282-288)

#### A. The Maze of Campaign Finance Reforms

Campaigns are expensive. Money is also controversial because of the perception that money buys votes and influence. **The 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act** was meant to tighten reporting requirements for contributions and limit overall expenditures. **The act created the Federal Election Commission**, provided public financing for presidential primaries and general elections, limited presidential campaign spending, required disclosure, and limited contributions. In 1976 the Supreme Court struck down the portion of the act that had limited the amount individuals could contribute to their own campaigns as a violation of free speech. In 1979 the act was amended to make it easier for political parties to raise money for voter registration drives and the distribution of campaign material at the grass-roots level. This is known as soft money and is not subject to any contribution limits. Critics, such as Senators John McCain and Russell Feingold, argue that big-money contributors of soft money have been given political appointments. Campaign spending reforms have made campaigns more open and honest.

#### B. The Proliferation of **PACs**

Campaign reforms also encouraged the spread of political action committees (PACs). Any interest group can form its own PAC to channel contributions of up to \$5,000 per candidate. They can spend unlimited amounts indirectly if not coordinated with the campaign. The number of PACs has grown rapidly. Candidates need PACs to pay for high-tech campaigning. Candidates need money and PACs want access to officeholders. Critics argue that PAC money leads to PAC control over what the winners do once in office. On some issues, PAC money may make a difference. However, most PACs give money to candidates who agree with them in the first place. The impact of PAC money on presidents is doubtful since presidential campaigns are less dependent on PACs.

#### C. **Are Campaigns Too Expensive?**

Every four years Americans spend over \$2 billion on national, state, and local elections. Compared with the amount of money spent on items of far less importance, this is very little. Fund raising has come to take up much of politicians' precious time. Some lawmakers support some sort of public financing reform, but it is difficult to get members of Congress to agree to finance people who are challenging them for their seats.

Today:

#### D. Does Money Buy Victory?

The most basic complaint about money and politics is that there may be a direct link between dollars spent and votes received. Incumbents who face a tough opponent must raise more money to meet the challenge, but when the challenger is not a serious

threat, incumbents need less money. More important than having "more" money is having "enough." Enough money is needed to get your message across effectively.

#### IV. The Impact of Campaigns (288-289)

Campaigns can have three effects on voters: **reinforcement, activation, and conversion**. Research has shown that campaigns mostly reinforce and activate; only rarely do they convert. Most people pay relatively little attention to campaigns in the first place, relying on selective perception. Party identification and other factors still have a strong influence on voting behavior. Finally, incumbents always start with a substantial advantage.

#### V. Understanding Nominations and Campaigns (289-290)

##### A. Are Nominations and Campaigns Too Democratic?

American campaigns are much more open than elections in other countries. However, this openness creates a situation where campaigns seem to last forever. Citizens become overwhelmed by the process and may stay on the sidelines. Campaigns may also discourage good candidates from running. Campaigns promote individualism in American politics.

##### B. Do Campaigns Lead to Increases in the **Scope of Government**?

Because states are key battlegrounds of presidential campaigns, candidates tailor their appeals to the interests of each major state. Thus, as the campaign goes on, more promises are made in different states. Promises add up to new government programs and money. It is hard for politicians to promise that the scope of government will be limited through specific cuts.