

Political Parties

Why do political parties exist?

Why does the United States have a two-party system?

Are there real differences between the Republican and Democratic Parties?



Political Parties

- Organizations that want to:
 - Control government, decide policy by getting members elected
 - Different from interest groups, which are groups that seek to influence government policy but not control government with its own members



The two major parties in the U.S.
(2 that can realistically compete for control of government)

- Republican Party

- Democratic Party





Thomas Nast 1874 editorial cartoon in Harper's Weekly that introduced the elephant as symbol of the Republican Party

From <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-the-parties-got-their-animal-symbols/>

There are minor or “Third” parties in the U.S.

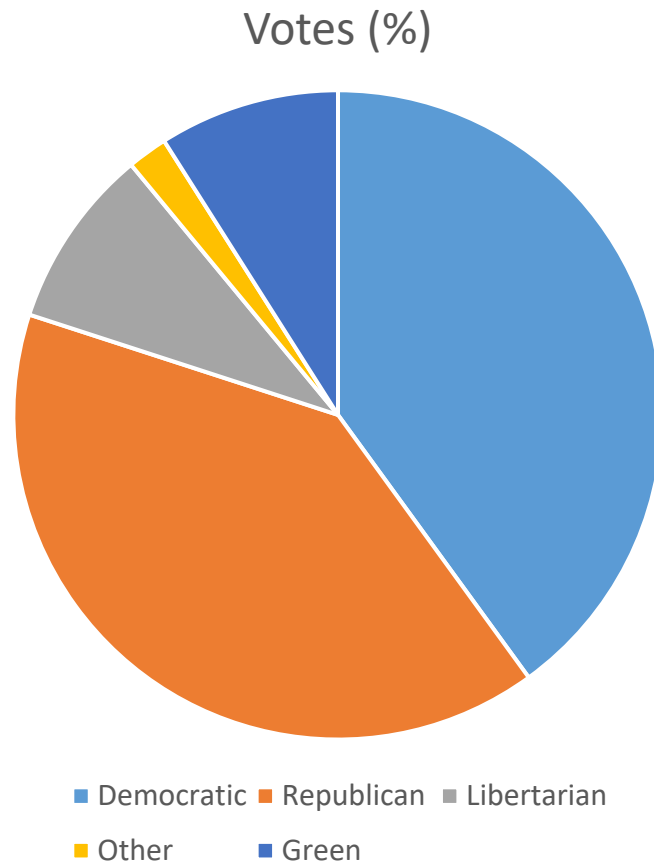
- Some Past Third Parties
 - America Party
 - [American Know-Nothing](#)
 - Bull Moose Progressive
 - [Bull Moose \(Progressive\)](#)
 - Populist Party
 - [Populist Party](#)
- Present includes Green Party, Libertarian
- Typically they do not receive many votes



Why A Two-party System?

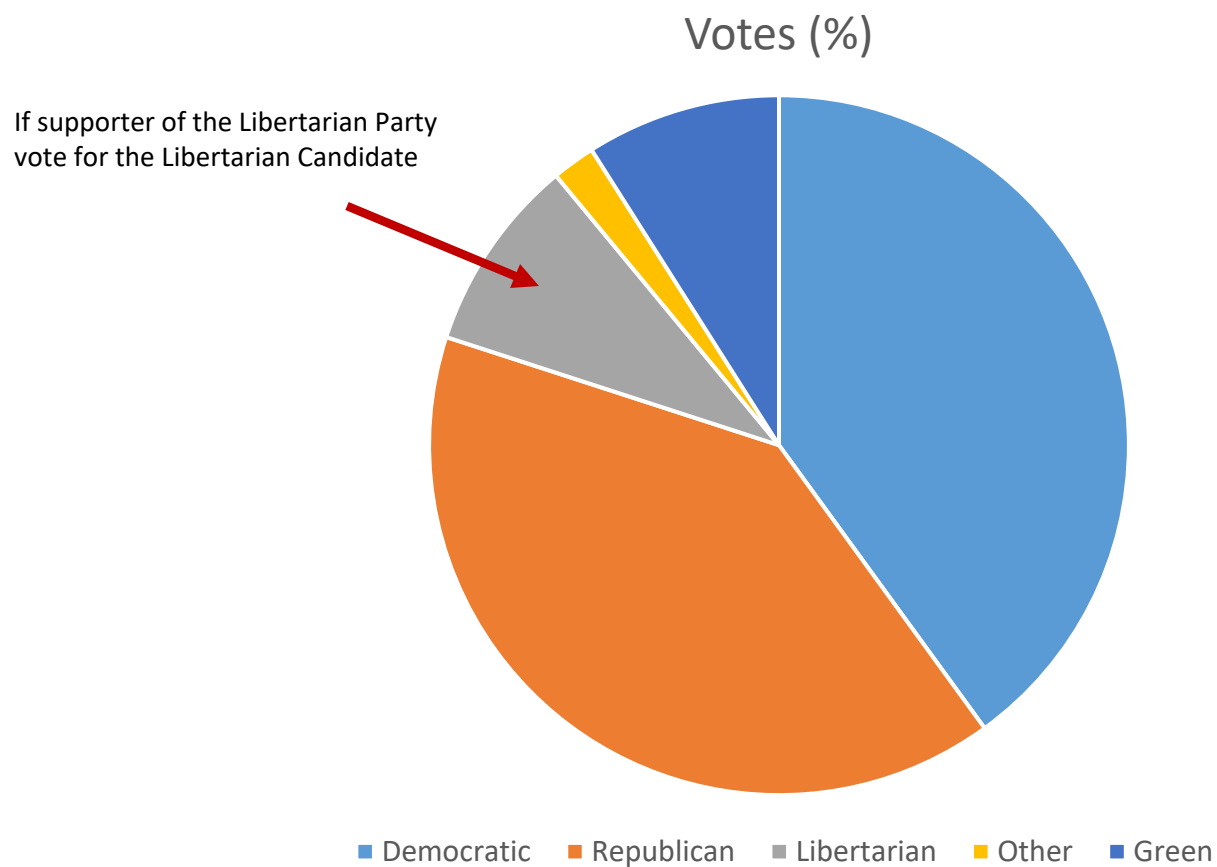
- Electoral Rules
 - winner-take-all, single-member plurality districts
 - ballot hurdles (restrictions on which parties can get on ballots in the states)
- Funding
 - The major parties tend to have more money
- Media coverage
 - The media pays more attention and devotes more time to covering the major parties

Single-Member, Plurality District Elections (SMP)

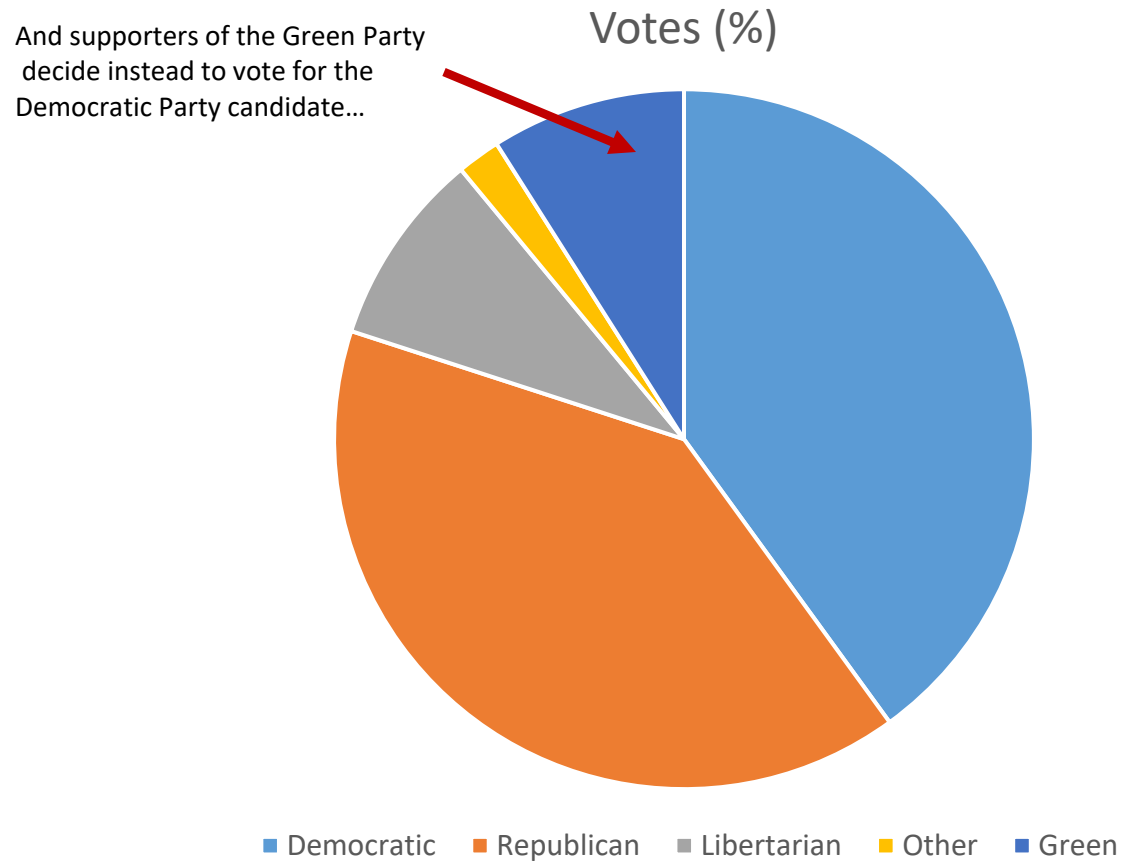


- System:
 - One person elected
 - Whoever gets the most votes wins (not necessarily 50%+1)
- Possible motivation
 - Votes don't want to "waste" vote
 - Supporters of smaller parties will predict that their preferred party candidate will not get enough votes to win
 - Supporters of smaller parties will vote for a major party candidate because they do not want the other party to win
 - A Libertarian will vote for a Republican and a Green party member will vote for a Democrat

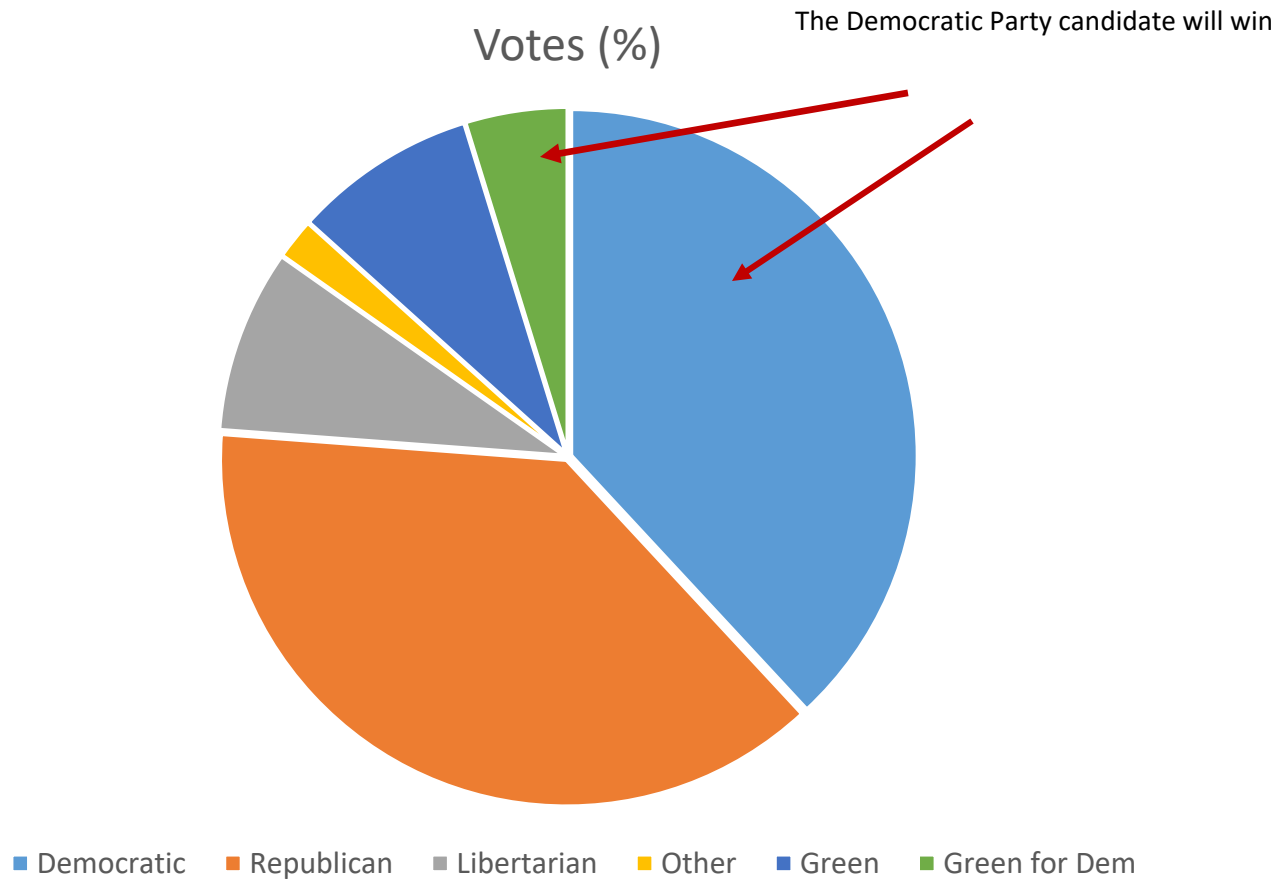
One Example of the Reasoning



Example

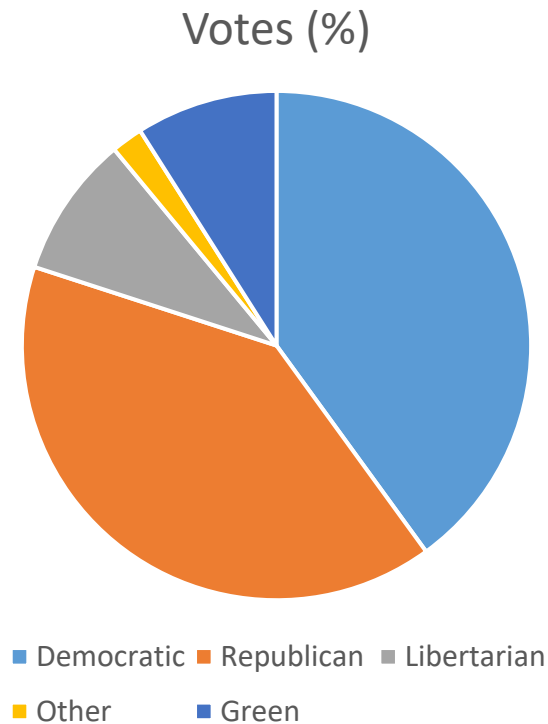


Example

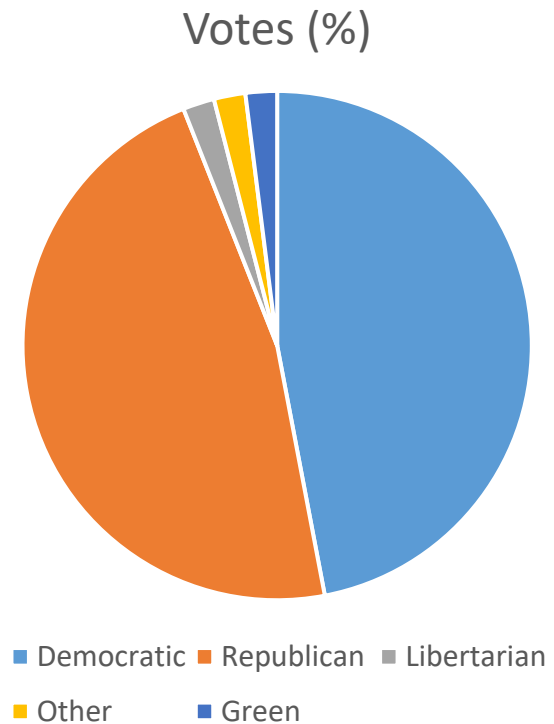


Comparing preferences and likely votes

Population Preferences



Probable Vote Totals

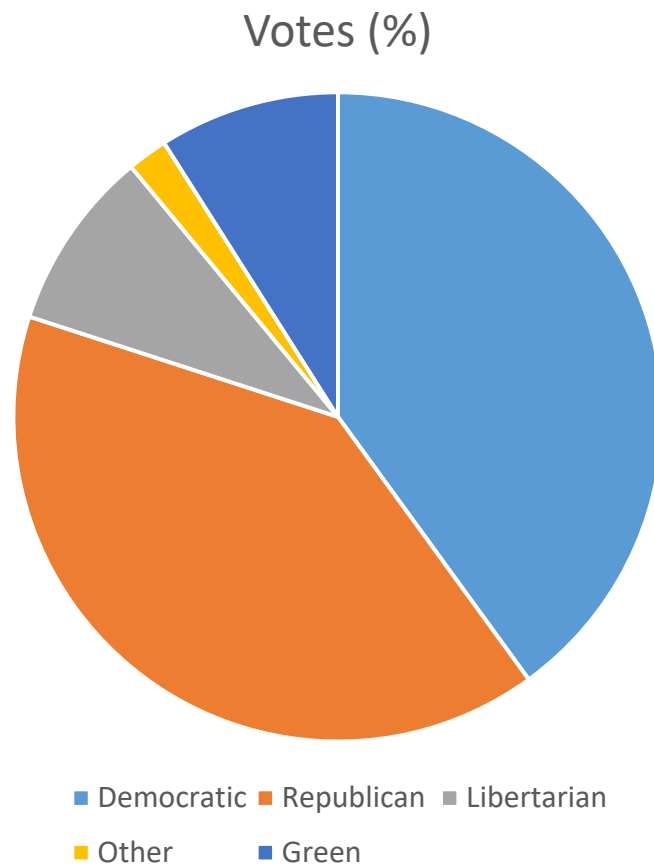


A quick digression about other
voting systems

The Proportional Representation (PR) system

- The Proportional Representation (PR) system is more common in the rest of the world
 - NOT to be confused with representation based on population
 - NOT the same as seats in the US House of Representatives being districted based on population of the states
- In PR, the percentage of seats that any party wins in legislative elections is equal to the percentage of the votes they receive
 - Each district elects multiple winners (instead of the single-member district)
 - Each political parties have a list of candidates who will win if the party gets enough votes
 - The % of seats = % of votes
 - If a party receives 9% of the vote, it receives 9% of the seats

Back to the original example, but with PR



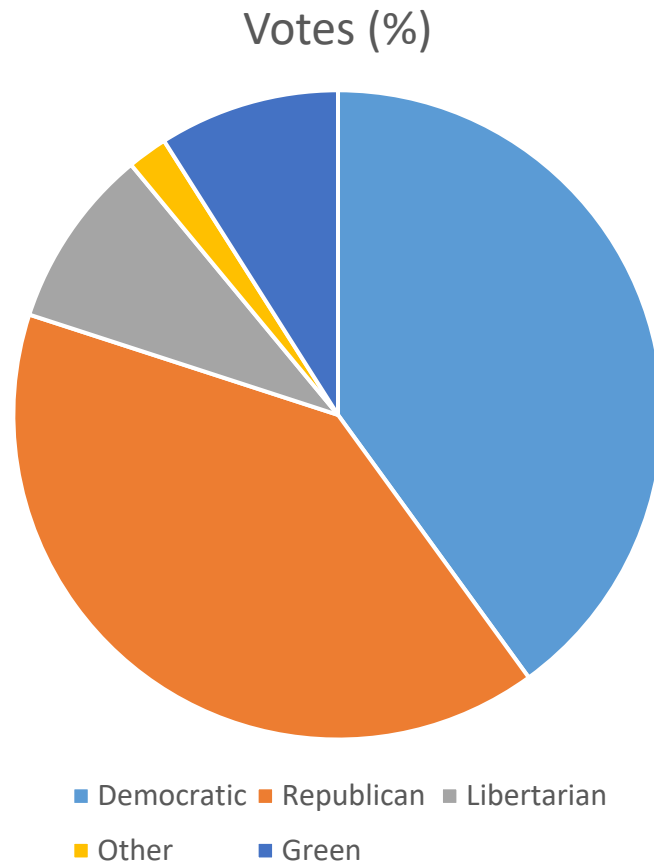
- In this original example, under SMP Libertarian and Green Party candidates are unlikely to win.
- In PR, both parties are likely to win seats in the same % as votes: 9% each.
- If this were an election in which 100 representatives are chosen, the Libertarian and Green Party would each elect 9 representatives



Ranked-Choice Voting

- Ranked-Choice Voting allow voters to specify their preferences for candidates on the ballot
 - They rank the candidates in order of preference: #1, #2, #3
- When the ballots are counted, the candidate with the least number of ballots is eliminated and the ballots they received are redistributed according to the preferences.
 - This continues until a candidate receives a majority of the vote
- *Note: this is a very brief overview that assumes a single-member district*

Back to the original example, but with RCV



- In this original example, under SMP Libertarian and Green Party candidates are unlikely to win.
- In PR, both parties are likely to win seats in the same % as votes: 9% each.
- With RCV, one party candidate would win. A supporter of the Libertarian Party could rank the Libertarian candidate #1 and the Republican candidate #2. If the Libertarian candidate is eliminated, the supporter's ballot would then be switched to the #2 choice: the Republican

Ballot Hurdles

In California (from Secretary of State Website)

Elections & Voter Information

About Elections Division

Statewide Election Results

Register to Vote

Pre-Register to Vote

Voter Registration Status

Voter Registration Statistics

Ballot Measures

Voting In California

Political Parties

Upcoming Elections

Publications & Resources

Voting Technology

Elections Site Map

Contact Information

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Political Party Qualification

A qualified political party is entitled to participate in any primary election or presidential general election. (Elections Code § 338.) The following information is for a new political party to be entitled to participate in either the June 5, 2018, primary election or the November 6, 2018, general election.

The political parties currently qualified to participate in the elections are, in alphabetical order: the American Independent Party, the Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Libertarian Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, and the Republican Party.

Beginning the Process of Qualifying a Political Party

Whenever a group of electors desires to qualify a new political party, the group shall form a political body by carrying out the following two requirements (Elections Code § 5001):

Hold a Caucus or Convention

The group of electors must hold a caucus or convention at which temporary officers shall be elected and a party name designated. The designated name shall not be so similar to the name of an existing party so as to mislead the voters, and shall not conflict with that of any existing political party or other political body.

Filing Notice with Secretary of State

Following the convention, the group must file a formal notice with the Secretary of State. The notice must contain the following information:

- That the political body has organized,
- That the political body elected temporary officers,
- That the political body intends to qualify a political party pursuant to Elections Code section 5100 or 5151, but not both, and
- The names and addresses of the temporary officers of the political body.

above notice. This request must be made within the first 70 days after filing the notice. (Elections Code § 5000.)



Two Methods to Qualify a Political Party

A political body may use one of two methods to qualify as a political party: voter registration or petition. (Elections Code §§ 5100, 5151.)

Voter Registration Method - Elections Code Section 5100(b) or 5151(c)

- 1 To qualify a new political party by voter registration requires that voters equal in number to at least 0.33 percent of the total number of voters registered on the 154th day before the primary election or the 123rd day before the presidential general election complete an affidavit of registration, disclosing a preference by writing in the name of the political body intending to qualify as a political party. (Elections Code §§ 5100(b), 5151(c).)

These completed affidavits of registration must be submitted to the county elections officials 154 days prior to any primary election (if intending to qualify to participate in the next primary election) or 123 days before a presidential general election (if intending to qualify to participate in the next presidential general election). (Elections Code §§ 2187(d)(1), (d)(4).) The completed affidavits of registration should be submitted to the elections official in the counties of the voters' residences. They may be submitted to the Secretary of State's office, although this will result in delays to the counties' receipt of the affidavits.

- 154 days prior to the June 5, 2018, primary election is January 2, 2018.
- 123 days prior to the November 6, 2020, presidential general election is July 3, 2020.

The Secretary of State must determine, from examining and totaling the reports of registration from the counties, that the political body obtained voter registrations equal in number to at least 0.33 percent of the total number of voters registered on the 154th day before the primary election or the 123rd day before the presidential general election. (Elections Code §§ 5100(b), 5151(c).)

If a political body chooses to use the voter registration method, they can contact the Secretary of State Elections Division to obtain voter registration cards. Any request of 50 or more voter registration cards will require a representative from the political body to complete and submit a "Voter Registration Card Statement of Distribution" form to the Secretary of State. A "Voter Registration Card Statement of Distribution" form is available on the Secretary of State's website at elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/vrdis.pdf. The completed form must be mailed or faxed to:

Secretary of State
Elections Division

information on voter registration drives is available on the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/additional-elections-information/publications-and-resources/guide-vr-drives/.

2 Petition Method - Elections Code Section 5100(c) or 5151(d)

To qualify a new political party by petition, no later than 135 days prior to the primary election or the presidential general election, the Secretary of State must determine if a political body intending to qualify collected petition signatures of registered voters equal to 10 percent of the votes cast at the last gubernatorial election. (Elections Code §§ 5100(c), 5151(d).) The current signature requirement is 751,398 (10% of 7,513,972, the votes cast at the November 4, 2014, gubernatorial election).

In order for the Secretary of State to make this determination on or before the 135th day prior to the primary election or the presidential general election, the counties must have ample time to count and verify the signatures.

- 135 days prior to the June 5, 2018, primary election is January 21, 2018.
- 135 days prior to the November 6, 2018, presidential general election is June 21, 2020.

If a political body chooses the petition process, it is responsible to print and distribute petitions at its expense. The Secretary of State does not review the petition prior to its distribution. The political body may need to obtain the services of an attorney who is familiar with election law to ensure the accuracy of the petition.

The petition process to qualify a political party is similar to the initiative petition process. (Elections Code §§ 5100(c), 5151(d).) For example, the petitions must be filed with the appropriate county elections officials and may be submitted in sections; however, all the sections submitted in a single county must be filed at the same time. Information on the initiative process is available on the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ca.gov/ballot-measures/initiative-guide.htm.

If the Political Body Qualifies as a Political Party

A newly qualified political party must determine which existing political party's statutory provisions it will follow for the operation of its activities. The temporary officers of the newly qualified political party shall file notice of its selection with the Secretary of State not later than 30 days after the political party qualifies. (Elections Code § 5005.)

A political party newly qualified pursuant to Elections Code section 5100 must also determine which existing political party's statutory provisions it will follow for the conduct of its presidential primary election. If the newly qualified political party has not elected permanent officers, the temporary officers shall notify the Secretary of State of its selection on or before the 125th day before the presidential primary election. (Elections Code § 5006.)

Media Coverage

1992 Presidential Debates



<https://library.wustl.edu/wustl-presidential-vice-presidential-debates/>