

Study Outline

Chapter 8: Elections and Campaigns

I. Presidential versus congressional campaigns

A. Introduction

1. Two phases: getting nominated and getting elected
2. Getting nominated
 - a. Getting a name on the ballot
 - b. An individual effort (versus organizational effort in Europe)
 - c. Parties play a minor role (compared with Europe)
 - d. Parties used to play a major role

B. Major differences

1. Presidential races are more competitive.
 - a. House races have lately been one-sided for Democrats.
 - b. Presidential winner rarely gets more than 55 percent of vote
 - c. Most House incumbents are reelected (more than 90 percent)
2. Fewer people vote in congressional elections
 - a. Unless election coincides with presidential election
 - b. Gives greater importance to partisan voters (party regulars)
3. Congressional incumbents can service their constituents.
 - a. Can take credit for governmental grants, programs, and so forth
 - b. President can't: power is not local
4. Congressional candidates can duck responsibility.
 - a. "I didn't do it; the people in Washington did!"
 - b. President is stuck with blame
 - c. But local candidates can suffer when their leader's economic policies fail
5. Benefit of presidential coattails has declined
 - a. Congressional elections have become largely independent
 - b. Reduces meaning (and importance) of party

C. Running for president

1. Getting mentioned
 - a. Using reporters, trips, speeches, and name recognition
 - b. Sponsoring legislation, governing large state
2. Setting aside time to run
 - a. Reagan: six years
 - b. May have to resign from office first
3. Money
 - a. Individuals can give \$1,000, political action committees (PACs) \$5,000
 - b. Candidates must raise \$5,000 in twenty states to qualify for matching grants to pay for primary
4. Organization
 - a. Need a large (paid) staff
 - b. Need volunteers
 - c. Need advisers on issues: position papers
5. Strategy and themes
 - a. Incumbent versus challenger: defend or attack?
 - b. Setting the tone (positive or negative)
 - c. Developing a theme: trust, confidence, and so on
 - d. Judging the timing
 - e. Choosing a target voter: who's the audience?

D. Getting elected to Congress

1. Malapportionment and gerrymandering.
2. Establishing the size of the House
3. Winning the primary
 - a. Ballot procedures
 - b. Developing a personal following for the "party's" nomination
 - c. Incumbent advantage
4. Sophomore surge
 - a. Using the perks of office
 - b. Campaigning for / against Congress

- 5. Impact of the way we elect individuals to Congress
 - a. Legislators closely tied to local concerns
 - b. Weak party leadership
- II. Primary versus general campaigns
 - A. Kinds of elections and primaries: general versus primary elections
 - B. Differences between primary and general campaigns
 - 1. What works in a general election may not work in a primary
 - a. Different voters, workers, and media attention
 - b. Must mobilize activists with money and motivation to win nomination
 - c. Must play to the politics of activists
 - 2. Iowa caucuses
 - a. Held in February of general election year
 - b. Candidates must do well
 - c. Winners tend to be "ideologically correct"
 - d. Most liberal Democrat, most conservative Republican
 - e. The caucus system: "musical chairs and fraternity pledge week"
 - 3. The balancing act
 - a. Being conservative (or liberal) enough to get nominated
 - b. Move to center to get elected
 - c. True nationwide in states where activists are more polarized than average voter
 - d. The "clothespin vote": neither candidate is appealing
 - 4. Even primary voters can be more extreme ideologically than the average voter
Example: McGovern in 1972
 - C. Two kinds of campaign issues
 - 1. Position issues
 - 2. Valence issues
 - D. Television, debates, and direct mail
 - 1. Paid advertising (spots)
 - a. Has little (or a very subtle) effect on outcome: spots tend to cancel each other out
 - b. Most voters rely on many sources of information.
 - 2. News broadcasts (visuals)
 - a. Cost little
 - b. May have greater credibility with voters
 - c. Rely on having TV camera crew around
 - d. May be less informative than spots
 - 3. Debates
 - a. Usually an advantage only to the challenger
 - b. Reagan in 1980: reassured voters
 - c. Primary debates: the "dating game" in 1988
 - 4. Risk of slips of the tongue on visuals and debates
 - a. Ford and Poland, Carter and lust, Reagan and trees
 - b. Forces candidates to rely on stock speeches
 - c. Sell yourself, not your ideas
 - 5. Free television time to major presidential candidates in 1996
 - 6. The computer
 - a. Makes direct mail campaigns possible
 - b. Allows candidates to address specific voters
 - c. Creates importance of mailing lists
 - 7. The gap between running a campaign and running the government
 - a. Party leaders had to worry about reelection
 - b. Today's political consultants don't
- III. Money
 - A. How important is it?
 - 1. "Money is the mother's milk of politics."
 - 2. Presidential candidates spent \$286 million in 1992; up from \$177 million in 1988
 - 3. Are candidates being "sold" like soap? Answer is not so obvious
 - B. The sources of campaign money
 - 1. Presidential primaries: part private, part public money
 - a. Federal matching funds
 - b. Only match small donors: less than \$250; \$5,000 in twenty states

- c. Gives incentive to raise money from small donors
 - d. Government also gives lump-sum grants to parties to cover conventions
 - 2. Presidential general elections: all public money
 - 3. Congressional elections: all private money
 - a. From individuals, PACs, and parties
 - b. Most from individual small donors (\$100 to \$200 a person)
 - c. \$1,000 maximum for individual donors
 - d. Benefit performances by rock stars, etc.
 - e. \$5,000 limit from PACs
 - f. But most PACs give only a few hundred dollars
 - g. Tremendous PAC advantage to incumbents: backing the winner
 - h. Challengers have to pay their own way; only one-sixth from PACs
- C. Campaign finance rules
- 1. Watergate
 - a. Dubious and illegal money raising schemes
 - b. Democrats and Republicans benefited from unenforceable laws.
 - c. Nixon's resignation and a new campaign finance law
 - 2. Reform law
 - a. Set limit on individual donations (\$1,000 per election)
 - b. Reaffirmed ban on corporate and union donations, but allowed them to raise money through PACs
 - c. Set limit on PAC donations (\$5,000 per election to individuals, \$15,000 per year to a party)
 - d. Federal tax money made available for primaries and general election campaigns.
 - 3. Impact of the law
 - a. Increase in money spent on elections
 - b. Increase in PAC spending
 - c. Additional problems: independent expenditures and soft money
 - 4. Campaign finance reform
 - a. Reforms can have unintended consequences
 - b. Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002
 - 1. Ban on soft money
 - 2. Increase on individual contributions (to \$2,000 per candidate per election)
 - 3. Restrictions on independent expenditures
- D. Money and winning
- 1. During peacetime, presidential elections usually decided by three things:
 - a. Political party affiliation
 - b. State of the economy
 - c. Character of candidates
 - 2. Money makes a difference in congressional races
 - a. Challenger must spend to gain recognition
 - b. Jacobson: big-spending challengers do better
 - c. Big-spending incumbents also do better
 - 3. Party, incumbency, and issues also have a role
 - 4. Advantages of incumbency
 - a. Easier to raise money
 - b. Can provide services for constituency
 - c. Can use franked mailings
 - d. Can get free publicity through legislation and such
- IV. What decides elections?
- A. Party identification, but why don't Democrats always win?
 - 1. Democrats less wedded to their party
 - 2. GOP does better among independents
 - 3. Republicans have higher turnout
 - B. Issues, especially the economy
 - 1. V. O. Key: most voters who switch parties do so in their own interests
 - a. They know which issues affect them personally
 - b. They care strongly about emotional issues (abortion, etc.)
 - 2. Prospective voting
 - a. Know the issues and vote for the best candidate

- b. Most common among activists and special interest groups
 - c. Few voters use prospective voting because it requires information.
 - 3. Retrospective voting
 - a. Judge the incumbent's performance and vote accordingly
 - b. Have things gotten better or worse, especially economically?
 - c. Examples: presidential campaigns of 1980, 1984, 1988, and 1992
 - d. Usually helps incumbent unless economy has gotten worse
 - e. Most elections decided by retrospective votes
 - f. Midterm election: voters turn against president's party
 - C. The campaign
 - 1. Campaigns do make a difference
 - a. Reawaken voters' partisan loyalties
 - b. Let voters see how candidates handle pressure
 - c. Let voters judge candidates' characters
 - 2. Campaigns tend to emphasize themes over details
 - a. True throughout American history
 - b. What has changed is the importance of primary elections and tone of campaigns
 - c. Theme campaigns give more influence to single-issue groups
 - D. Finding a winning coalition
 - 1. Ways of looking at various groups
 - a. How *loyal*, or percentage voting for party
 - b. How *important*, or number voting for party
 - 2. Democratic coalition
 - a. Blacks most loyal
 - b. Jews slipping somewhat
 - c. Hispanics somewhat mixed
 - d. Catholics, southerners, unionists departing the coalition lately
 - 3. Republican coalition
 - a. Party of business and professional people
 - b. Very loyal, defecting only in 1964
 - c. Usually wins vote of poor because of retired, elderly voters
 - 4. Contribution to Democratic coalition
 - a. Blacks loyal but small proportion
 - b. Catholics, unionists, and southerners largest part but least dependable
- V. The Effect of Elections on Policy
 - A. Political scientists are interested broad trends in winning and losing
 - B. Cynics: public policy remains more or less the same no matter which official or party is in office
 - 1. Comparison: Great Britain, with parliamentary system and strong parties, often sees marked changes, as in 1945
 - 2. Reply: evidence indicates that many American elections do make great differences in policy
 - 3. Why, then, the perception that elections do not matter? Because change alternates with consolidation; most elections are only retrospective judgments