

Political Parties

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1 Political Parties

Characteristics of American Political Parties:

1. **Pragmatism** - Ideas are judged on the basis of their practical results rather than on an ideological basis
2. **Decentralization** - American parties reflect the federal system and the decentralization of power between the various levels: national, state, local, and grassroots (precinct).
3. **The two-party system** - only two parties have a realistic chance to win seats. Third parties find it difficult to gain momentum.

The One-Party tradition in Texas

There were no political parties under the Republic of Texas, but two factions (pro- anti-Houston). Texas was dominated by the Democrats from statehood until the 1990s. Republicans were largely associated with the Great Depression.

Ideological Basis of Factionalism: Conservatives and Liberals

- Conservatives
 - support a free market unfettered by government control
 - Support government action to preserve proper moral values
 - Oppose programs that involve redistribution of wealth
- Libertarians
 - Support an economic hands-off philosophy
 - Support individual liberty and personal responsibility
- Liberals
 - Believe the government should regulate the economy, protect the disadvantages, uphold and protect civil rights and liberties, and promote equality.

Factions within the Democratic party resembled a two-party system. There were liberal democrats and conservative (moderate) democrats. Republicans often crossed party lines and supported conservative democrats.

Conservative Democrats controlled the party until 1978. These were “shivercrats”, who voted democrat in state elected, and republican in federal elections. They were more likely to vote.

Rise of the Republican Party

1961 Republican John Tower elected to U.S. Senate

1978 Republican Bill Clements wins governor’s seat

1992 Republicans hold both Senate seats

1998 Republicans win every statewide election

Factions in the Republican Party

- Fundamentalist/Evangelical Christians
 - Concerned with moral issues
- Economic/Business
 - Concerned with lower taxes, favorable business conditions
 - Concerned fundamentalists will jeopardize republican ability to win elections
 - More moderate

Party Organization

Precinct and State conventions are held yearly or biennially to elect party leaders. The parties views are set at these conventions, but are guided by the parties permanent views.