

# The History of American Political Parties

## First Two-Party System Federalists v. Republicans, 1780s - 1801

Federalists	Republicans
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Favored strong central government.</li> <li>2. "Loose" interpretation of the Constitution.</li> <li>3. Encouragement of commerce and manufacturing.</li> <li>4. Strongest in Northeast.</li> <li>5. Favored close ties with Britain.</li> <li>6. Emphasized order and stability.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasized states' rights.</li> <li>2. "Strict" interpretation of the Constitution.</li> <li>3. Preference for agriculture and rural life.</li> <li>4. Strength in South and West.</li> <li>5. Foreign policy sympathized with France.</li> <li>6. Stressed civil liberties and trust in the people</li> </ol>
<p>[In practice, these generalizations were often blurred and sometimes contradicted.]</p>	

## Second Two-Party System Democrats v. Whigs, 1836 - 1850

Democrats	Whigs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The party of tradition.</li> <li>2. Looked backward to the past.</li> <li>3. Spoke to the fears of Americans</li> <li>4. Opposed banks and corporations as. state-legislated economic privilege.</li> <li>5. Opposed state-legislated reforms and preferred individual freedom of choice.</li> <li>6. Were Jeffersonian agrarians who favored farms and rural independence and the right to own slaves.</li> <li>7. Favored rapid territorial expansion over space by purchase or war.</li> <li>8. Believed in progress through external growth.</li> <li>9. Democratic ideology of agrarianism, slavery, states rights, territorial expansion was favored in the South.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The party of modernization.</li> <li>2. Looked forward to the future.</li> <li>3. Spoke to the hopes of Americans.</li> <li>4. Wanted to use federal and state government to promote economic growth, especially transportation and banks.</li> <li>5. Advocated reforms such as temperance and public schools and prison reform.</li> <li>6. Were entrepreneurs who favored industry and urban growth and free labor.</li> <li>7. Favored gradual territorial expansion over time and opposed the Mexican War.</li> <li>8. Believed in progress through internal growth</li> <li>9. Whig ideology of urbanization, industrialization, federal rights, commercial expansion was favored in the North.</li> </ol>

## Mid-19th Century Political Crisis

<p>Disputes over slavery in the territories first erode, then destroy what had become America's second two-party system. The erosion began in the 1840s as various factions opposed to the post-Jackson Democratic political coalition begin to form.</p>	
<b>Liberty Party</b>	<b>Free Soil Party</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run abolitionist candidate James Birney, for president in 1844.</li> <li>2. Won only 2% of the vote but drew votes from the Whigs, especially in New York.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not abolitionist but opposed to expansion of slavery in the territories.</li> <li>2. Won 10% of the popular vote with Martin Van Buren as their candidate in 1848.</li> <li>3. Lost 50% of their support in 1852 when their candidate repudiated the Compromise of 1850</li> </ol>
<b>Whigs</b>	<b>Native American Party</b>
<p>Split over slavery into:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Southern, "Cotton" Whigs who eventually drifted into the Democratic Party.</li> <li>2. Northern, "Conscience" Whigs who moved to new parties, i.e. Free Soil and, later, into the Republican Party.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Popularly known as the "Know Nothing" Party.</li> <li>2. Nativist party based on opposition to immigration and on temperance.</li> <li>3. Run Millard Fillmore in 1856 and win 21% of the popular vote.</li> <li>4. Absorbed into the Republican Party after 1856.</li> </ol>
<b>Republican Party</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formed in 1854 when a coalition of Independent Democrats, Free Soilers, and Conscience Whigs united in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.</li> <li>2. Stressed free labor and opposed the <i>extension</i> of slavery in the territories ("Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men!").</li> <li>3. Moderates, like Abraham Lincoln, could, therefore, oppose slavery on "moral" grounds as wrong, while admitting that slavery had a "right" to exist where the Constitution originally allowed it to exist.</li> <li>4. John C. Fremont was the first Republican presidential candidate in the election of 1856.</li> </ol>	

## The Election of 1860

<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Split at its 1860 Convention in Charleston, South Carolina when a platform defending slavery was defeated and Deep South delegates walked out.</li> <li>2. At a splinter convention held at Baltimore, Maryland, <b>Stephen Douglas</b> of Illinois was nominated as presidential candidate on a platform opposing any Congressional interference with slavery..</li> <li>3. Southern delegates met and nominated <b>John Breckenridge</b> of Kentucky as a candidate on a pro-slavery platform.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Republicans, by this time a overtly sectional and decidedly opposed to slavery draw in most northerners with a platform favoring a homestead act, a protective tariff, and transportation improvements.</li> <li>2. The platform opposed the extension of slavery but defended the right of states to control their own "domestic institutions."</li> <li>3. <b>Abraham Lincoln</b> is nominated presidential candidate on the third ballot.</li> </ol>

## Politics of the Gilded Age, 1876 - 1900

### Republicans & Democrats

1. Party differences blur during this period with loyalties determined by region, religious, and ethnic differences.
2. Voter turnout for presidential elections averaged over 78 percent of eligible voters; 60 to 80 percent in non-presidential years.
3. Both parties were pro-business.
4. Both parties were opposed to any type of economic radicalism or reform.
5. Both parties advocated a "sound currency" and supported the status quo in the existing financial system.
6. Federal government and, to some extent, state governments tended to do very little.
7. Republicans dominate the Senate; Democrats dominate the House of Representatives.
8. Republican Party splinter groups during this period: Stalwarts, Halfbreeds, Mugwumps.

### Populist Party

1. Formed in 1891 by remnants of the Farmers' Alliances.
2. Big government party with a healthy list of demands that included:
  - o free coinage of silver,
  - o government ownership of the railroads, telegraphs, and telephone lines,
  - o graduated income tax,
  - o direct election of U. S. senators,
  - o the use of initiative, referendum, and recall
3. The party eventually fades because farmers' situation improved in the late 1890s and because their political agenda was assumed by the major parties.

## Progressive Era Politics, 1900 - 1920

1. Spanned the period 1900-1920 and the presidencies of three "Progressive" Presidents: Theodore Roosevelt (Republican), William Howard Taft (Republican), and Woodrow Wilson (Democrat).
2. Believed that the laissez-faire system was obsolete, yet supported capitalism.
3. Believed in the idea of progress and that reformed institutions would replace corrupt power.
4. Applied the principles of science and efficiency to all economic, social, and political instituting.
5. Viewed government as a key player in creating an orderly, stable, and improved society.
6. Believed that government had the power to combat special interests and work for the good of the community, state, or nation.
7. Political parties were singled out as corrupt, undemocratic, outmoded, and inefficient.
8. Power of corrupt government could be diminished by increasing the power of the people and by putting more power in the hands of non-elective, nonpartisan, professional officials.
9. The progressives eventually co-opt many of the Populist demands such as referendum, initiative, direct election of Senators, etc. Some of these are incorporated in the "Progressive" Amendments to the U. S. Constitution: 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th Amendments.

## The Republican Era, 1921 - 1933

1. From 1921 to 1933 both the presidency and congress were dominated by Republicans (Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover).
2. The position of the government was decidedly pro-business.
3. Though conservative, the government experimented with new approaches to public policy and was an active agent of economic change to respond to an American culture increasingly urban, industrial, and consumer-oriented.
4. Conflicts surfaced regarding immigration restriction, Prohibition, and race relations.
5. Generally, this period was a transitional one in which consumption and leisure were replacing older "traditional" American values of self-denial and the work ethic.

## The Political Legacy of the New Deal, 1933 - 1952

1. Created a Democratic party coalition that would dominate American politics for many years (1933-1952).
2. Included ethnic groups, city dwellers, organized labor, blacks, as well as a broad section of the middle class.
3. Awakened voter interest in economic matters and increased expectations and acceptance of government involvement in American life.
4. The New Deal coalition made the federal government a protector of interest groups and a mediator of the competition among them.
5. "Activists" role for government in regulating American business to protect it from the excesses and problems of the past.
6. Fair Deal of the post-war Truman administration continued the trend in governmental involvement: i.e. advocated expanding Social Security benefits, increasing the minimum wage, a full employment program, slum clearance, public housing, and government sponsorship of scientific research.
7. In 1948, the "liberal" or Democratic coalition split into two branches:

<b>States' Rights</b>	<b>Progressive Party</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Southern conservative Democrats known as "Dixiecrats."</li> <li>2. Opposed the civil rights plank in the Democratic platform.</li> <li>3. Nominated South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond for President.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Liberal" Democrats who favored gradual socialism, the abolition of racial segregation, and a conciliatory attitude toward Russia.</li> <li>2. Nominated Henry A. Wallace for president.</li> </ol>

## Post-World War 2 Politics, 1952 - 1968

<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Democrats maintain what by this time had become their "traditional" power base of organized labor, urban voters, and immigrants.</li> <li>2. In the 1952 election, the Democrats run Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, a candidate favored by "liberals" and intellectuals.</li> <li>3. As the post-World War 2 period progresses, the Democratic Party takes "big government" positions advocating larger roles for the federal government in regulating business and by the 1960s advocate extensive governmental involvement in social issues like education, urban renewal, and other social issues.</li> <li>4. The Democratic Party very early associates itself with the growing civil rights movements and will champion the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In 1952, the pro-business Republican Party ran General Dwight D. Eisenhower for president.</li> <li>2. The Republicans accuse the Democrats of being "soft" on communism.</li> <li>3. Republicans promise to end the Korean War.</li> <li>4. Conservative Southern Democrats, the "Dixiecrats," increasingly associate themselves with Republican candidates who oppose civil rights legislation.</li> </ol>

## Nixon's New Federalism, 1969 - 1980

<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Democratic Party by the late 1960s is deeply fragmented and seemingly incapable of dealing with the violence and turmoil, social and political, caused by the Vietnam War.</li> <li>2. In 1968, the Democratic Party candidate is Vice President Hubert Humphrey.</li> <li>3. In the post-Vietnam War period, Democrats advocate a range of "liberal" social issues including the extension of civil rights, support for "reproductive rights" (i.e. birth control and abortion rights), fair housing legislation, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opposition to the War in Vietnam and to growing federal social programs "converts" southern Democrats to vote Republican in increasing numbers.</li> <li>2. Republicans run former Vice President Richard Nixon for president in 1968. He runs on a small-government, anti-war campaign as a defender of the "silent majority."</li> <li>3. Nixon advocated a policy of cutting back Federal power and returning that power to the states. This was known as the "New Federalism."</li> </ol>

## Reagan and the "New Right," 1981 - Present (?)

<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strongly support environmental legislation, limiting economic development, halting the production of nuclear weapons and power plants.</li><li>2. Pro-choice movement emerged during the 1980s to defend a woman's right to choose whether and when to bear a child.</li><li>3. Affirmative Action, the use of racial quotas to "balance" the workforce, to one degree or another, becomes an issue of political disagreement with Democrats favoring it and Republicans opposing it.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Fueled by the increasingly "liberal" social agenda of the Democrats and spurred on by the rise of a militant and extremely well-organized Evangelical Christianity, most southern states begin voting Republican in considerable majorities.</li><li>2. Conservative Christians, Southern whites, affluent ethnic suburbanites, and young conservatives form a "New Right" that supported Ronald Reagan in 1980 on a "law and order" platform that advocated<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o stricter laws against crime, drugs, and pornography,</li><li>o opposition to easy-access abortions,</li><li>o and an increase in defense spending,</li><li>o a cut in tax rates.</li></ul></li><li>3. While Reagan curbed the expansion of the Federal Government, he did not reduce its size or the scope of its powers.</li></ol>