

Parties, Primaries, and the Presidential Election

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The process through which the president of the United States of America is elected is a complex and lengthy one. Have you ever wondered how the candidates were chosen? In this article I will explain the three key parts of the process. The first part is the primary process; this takes place within each party. It is followed by general election campaigning, which then culminates in the election and the Electoral College.



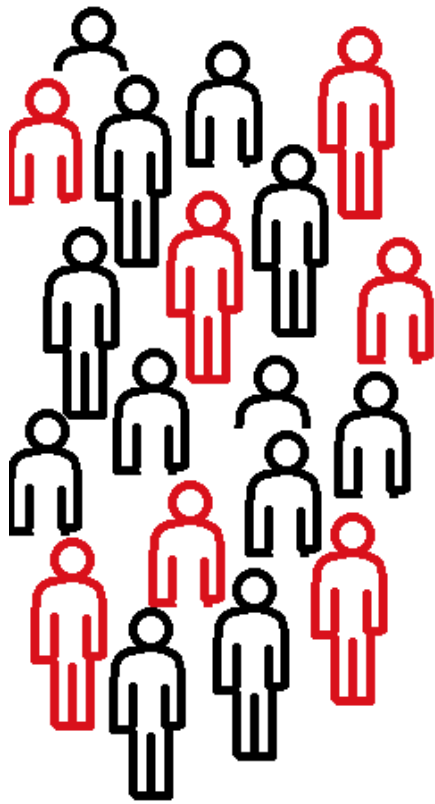
Each presidential election, there are multiple candidates on the ballot. These candidates go through a rigorous process known as the primaries. If a person would like to be their party's nominee for President, they get their name on the ballot. The two main parties are Republican and Democrat. During this process each state sets a primary election date. These elections begin in the January the year of the general election and normally finish by July. Candidates seeking the nomination for their respective party campaign in these states trying to win the votes of the citizens. When the state's election is held, the winner picks up delegates. Delegates are representatives of the state who will attend the convention of their party and cast their vote for the candidate who won their state (Ellis, 2011). Some states are winner--take--all states (Ellis, 2011). All other states that are not winner--take--all states divide their delegates based on the proportion of the vote that each candidate won in their state (Ellis, 2011). Candidates are trying to win a majority of delegates. These delegates from all fifty states gather together at the party convention and cast their votes to nominate their party's candidate for president (Longley). Whoever wins the majority of delegates will become the general election nominee for their party. If no primary candidate is able to win a majority of the delegates after the primaries have happened in each state, then the respective parties will decide on the party's nominee at the convention (Ellis, 2011).

Once a candidate is able to win the primary process, they then begin general election campaigning and fundraising. This

generally begins in June or July and goes through the election which is always held on the first Tuesday in November (U.S. Electoral College, Official). During this time the candidates will campaign in states that they feel they need to win in order to win the general election. Often times, the states that are truly up for grabs, otherwise known as battleground states, are few. This is because the candidates realize that the Republican nominee is almost certain to win states like Idaho and Texas. The Democratic candidate is almost always guaranteed to win states like New York and New Jersey. Candidates normally don't spend much time campaigning in these states; instead they choose to focus on states like Ohio, Virginia, and Florida where the electorate can be swayed (U. S. Electoral College, Official). The candidates also spend this time raising money in order to fund their campaigns. These funds come from donations and are used for advertisement, travel and promotions.

On the day of the General Election, people cast their ballots. They vote in order to determine which candidate their state will support. Each state has a certain number of electors, often called electoral votes, who are responsible for electing the president (Hallowell, 2012). Each state gets electors based on the number of representatives they have in congress (Hallowell, 2012). For example, since each state has two senators, they get two electoral votes, one for each senator (Hallowell, 2012). Each state also gets an elector for each member of the House of Representatives from their state (Hallowell, 2012). So Idaho, which has two Senators and two Representatives in the House, gets 4 electoral votes. Each candidate is trying to win a majority of the electoral votes, which is 270 or more. These electors will gather together in December after the election to formally elect the president (Hallowell, 2012). After all this time and effort, the candidate who gets a majority wins the election and is the next president of the United States and takes office the following January.





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