



# American Government

Unit 2

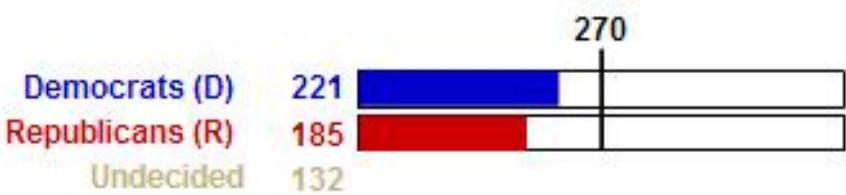
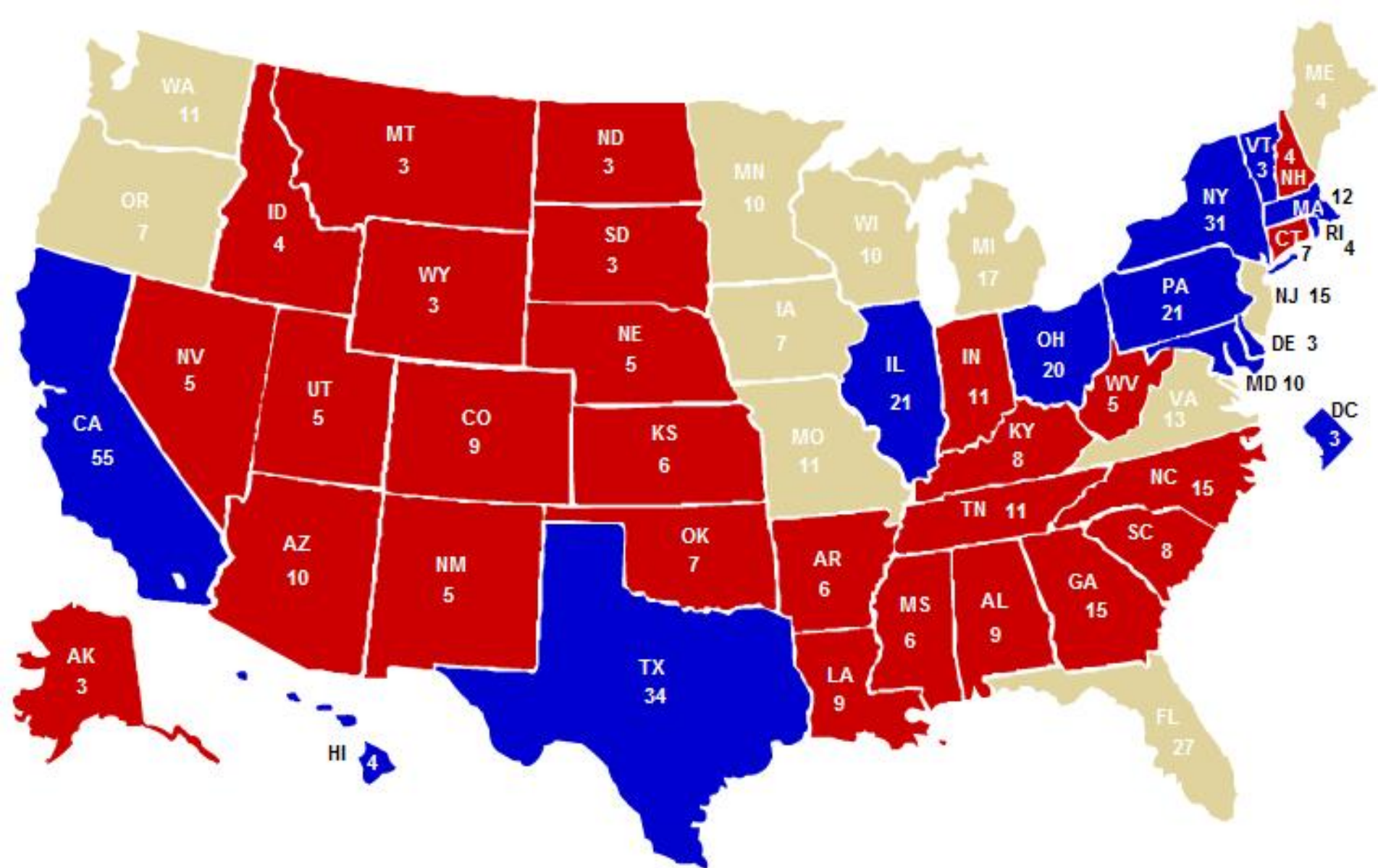
Chapter 17

*"Elections and Voting"*

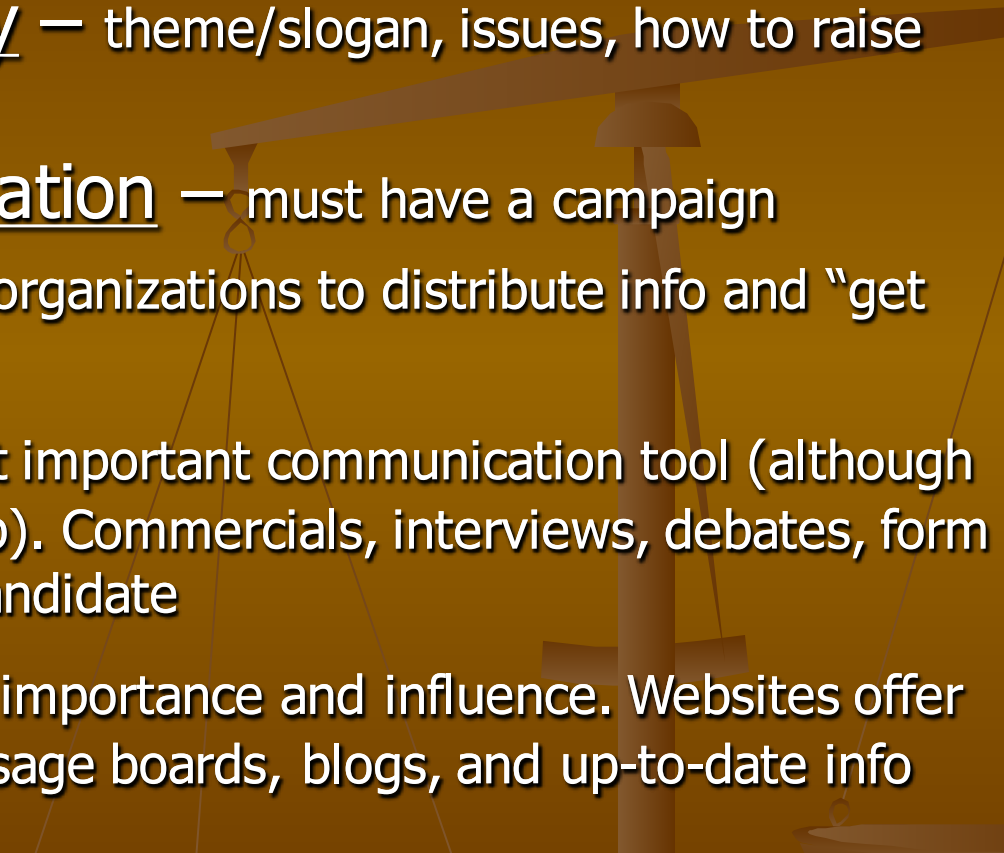
# Electing the President



- Election day - the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November (every 4<sup>th</sup> year, even years)
- Electoral Votes – 538 total (congressional representation = 100 Senate, 435 House, + 3 electoral votes from D.C.)
  - Need 270 to win.
  - The candidate that wins the popular vote in each state gets all of the electoral votes (usually).
  - Each state gets the number of electoral votes = to its congressional representation. (Least possible = 3, CA = 55)



# Electing the President

- Campaign Strategy — theme/slogan, issues, how to raise and spend money
  - Campaign Organization — must have a campaign manager, state and local organizations to distribute info and “get out the vote”
  - Television — the most important communication tool (although the internet is catching up). Commercials, interviews, debates, form the public image of the candidate
  - Internet — increasing importance and influence. Websites offer info to public, video, message boards, blogs, and up-to-date info and issues
- 

# Financing Campaigns



- **FECA (federal election campaign act)** provides framework for regulating campaign finance.
  - Requires public disclosure
  - Limits individual and group contributions
  - Offers public funds if candidates limit their spending – tax “check-off” \$3 each – major candidates automatically qualify,
    - Third-party candidates only qualify if their party got 5% of the vote in the previous election
- **FEC (federal election commission)** regulates campaign finance, sets and enforces limits.
  - Loophole=softmoney – not reported to the FEC or counted in limits.
- **Spending Limits=Controversial**
  - some believe people are buying elections (not democratic if only the rich can participate)
  - also leads to corruption (political favors owed in return for contributions).
  - Others say limits are violation of 1st Amendment rights to freedom of speech.

# Financing Campaigns

- **Small contributors** – \$5, \$10, \$25, or so from individuals – approx. 10% give.
- **Wealthy Individuals** – “fat cats” who contribute large sums of \$ to candidates, campaigns, or parties.
  - limits are \$1,000 for each primary or general election, \$5,000 per year to each PAC, \$20,000 to a national party committee - \$25,000 total in a year
- **Candidates** – many support themselves with their own money (Ross Perot \$65 million in '92)
- **PAC's** – extensions of interest groups that raise money to support candidates limits are:
  - \$5,000 for each primary, general election, \$15,000 per party per year – no overall limit
- **Temporary non-party groups** – organized to support certain candidates in specific elections.
- **Political Parties** – constantly fund raise at to support candidates at all levels - \$1000 dinners...

# Voting Rights

## ■ **History of Voting Rights – *expansion***

- The Constitution gave the states the right to set suffrage requirements but it has been increasingly controlled by the federal gov through ratification of Constitutional Amendments and other federal legislation.
- **1789-1800** – When the Constitution was ratified only white, male, property owners could vote. Restrictions also included religious tests, tax payment, and others.
- **1800-1850** – Religious, property, and tax requirements gradually eliminated by the states – by 1850 almost all white males could vote.
- **1870 – 15th Amendment** ratified protecting the right to vote from being denied on the basis of race or color. Not fully realized for about 100 years because of literacy tests, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, threats of violence and job loss.

# Voting Rights



- **1920 – 19th Amendment** ratified prohibiting the denial of the right to vote on the basis of sex.
  - Approx. half the states had already given the right to vote to women by this time. WY 1<sup>st</sup> in 1869.
- **1960's – Voting Right's Act of 1965** helped to ensure voting rights for Af. Americans
  - **23rd Amendment** ratified in 1961 gives electoral votes to DC
  - **24th Amendment** ratified in 1964 eliminated the poll tax (or any other taxes) as a condition for voting.
- **1971 – 26th Amendment** ratified extending the right to vote to 18 year olds.



# Voting Requirements



- **Citizenship** – you must be a citizen to vote – natural born or naturalized. Some states have a waiting period – must be a citizen for a period of time before allowed to vote.
- **Residence** – you must be a legal resident of the state in which you vote – usually a waiting period applies approx. 30 days.
- **Age** – as per the 26th amend. no state can set the minimum age to vote higher than 18.
- **Registration** – all states (except N.Dakota) requires registration to identify legal voters and gather information about party id, age, address, etc.
- **People Denied the Right to Vote** – insane, some convicted felons, dishonorably discharged from military, etc.

# Influence on Voters

## ■ Sociological Factors that Affect Voters

- **Income/Occupation** – higher levels tend to vote Rep/lower tend to vote Dem
- **Education** – higher levels tend to vote Rep/ lower tend to vote Dem
- **Gender, Age** – women and younger tend to vote Dem/ older, men tend Rep
- **Religious, Ethnic Background** – minority groups tend to vote Dem, Christians – Rep
- **Geography** – South used to be strong Dem now Rep, urban areas tend to be Dem
- **Family/Peer Groups** – 2/3 of voters follow parents, 9/10 married couples vote alike, people tend to vote along with their friends/co-workers.

# Influences on Voters



- **Party Identification** – most important predictor of voting regardless of issues/candidates
  - straight ticket voting
  - Long-term factor (rarely changes)
  - Trend toward independents but usually vote with one party most of the time.
- **Candidates/Issues** – short term factors that can cause people to “cross-over” vote or split-ticket vote.
- **Cross- Pressured Voters** – caught between conflicting issues in their life (religion, SES, peers)

# Voter Behavior

- **Idiot** – word came from the Greek – used in Athens to describe citizens who did not vote or participate in public life.
- **Non-Voters** – an increasing problem that can threaten the basis of our democracy.
  - **Why?**
    - Some can't (ineligible)
    - Many choose not to (don't trust gov, think their vote "doesn't count", don't like the candidates, turned off by negative campaigning, lack of interest or knowledge, weather, etc)
- **Turnout** – highest in Pres. election years and decreases in off-year elections and local races.
- **Voters vs. Non-Voters** – voters tend to have higher SES, education, income, job status. Also be over 35, married, "settled" into their community, have a relatively strong party affiliation, and believe that voting is important or that their vote is important.