

FIRST PARTY SYSTEM (1792–1820)

The first party system began with divisions in Washington's cabinet between Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. Hamilton supporters, who had strongly favored adopting the Federal Constitution, continued to call themselves Federalists. Jefferson's supporters called themselves Democratic-Republicans. At the time, "parties" or "factions" were considered disloyal and suspect, but strong party identities emerged by 1796. State parties operated in the elections of 1794, and the presidential elections of 1796 and 1800 were strongly competitive.

FEDERALIST

- The name "Federalist" originally referred to supporters of the Federal Constitution in the debates over its ratification.
- Wanted strong central government to promote commerce and manufacturing, including a national bank.
- Tended to be suspicious of democracy.
- Supported England in its wars with France.
- Support came especially from urban areas, business, and upper classes. Only white men with property could vote.
- Strongest in New England and coastal towns.

DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN

- Originally called themselves Republicans; called "Democrats" or "Democratic-Republicans" by opponents who saw democracy as dangerous.
- Believed that America's future was with small farmers and opposed "monied interests."
- Argued for states' rights and small government.
- Supported France in its wars with England.
- Support came from farmers as well as workers and craftsmen in towns. Only white men with property could vote.
- Strongest in the South and West.

SECOND PARTY SYSTEM (1828–1854)

The second party system emerged from a split within the Democratic-Republican Party. The two main factions were led by Andrew Jackson, hero of the War of 1812 and Indian wars, and Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Jackson's followers formed the Democratic Party, while Clay's formed the Whig Party. Although the parties were fairly evenly divided in Congress, the Whigs elected only two presidents, both of whom died in office. Democrats gradually came to support many Whig policies, such as industrialization and railroads, draining Whig support. The issue of slavery and its expansion into the western territories finally split the Whigs in the early 1850s.

DEMOCRATIC

- Organized around Andrew Jackson in the 1820s. During Jackson's Presidency, supported a strong president.
- Believed in small government and states' rights.
- Economically conservative. Opposed banks, especially the National Bank, and paper money. Believed the tariff was a tax on the poor to help the rich.
- Pushed for westward expansion.
- Support came from cities and market towns. Most conservative Protestants were Whigs, as were nearly all wealthy men. All white men could now vote in most states.

WHIG

- Believed that Congress should be stronger than the president. Saw Jackson's power as dangerous, and took the name "Whig" after Revolutionary Patriots who had fought against monarchical rule.
- To promote industry, supported a tariff (tax) on imported manufactured goods.
- Wanted "modernization" of the economy and society. Supported banks, education, moral reform, and "internal improvements" such as railroads.
- Support came from cities and market towns. Most conservative Protestants were Whigs, as were nearly all wealthy men. All white men could now vote in most states.

THIRD PARTY SYSTEM (1854–1896)

The third party system emerged from divisions over slavery. The two major parties of the 1850s continued to dominate American politics after the Civil War. They are the same parties still in existence today, but their issues, beliefs, and supporters have changed many times. After the Civil War, the major parties were tightly organized. In cities, party "bosses" organized voters, especially immigrants. Voters were extremely loyal to their parties, and voter turnout was high. Both parties were made up of

DEMOCRATIC

- After the Civil War, became essentially the only party in the South as African Americans were increasingly prevented from voting, although all men were now constitutionally eligible to vote.
- In the North and West, support continued from farmers, workers, and Catholic immigrants as well as a business-oriented urban and industrial workforce.
- Continued to support a low tariff and economically conservative policies.
- Tended to oppose reforms such as Prohibition.
- After the Civil War, controlled at the national level by Northern businessmen.

REPUBLICAN

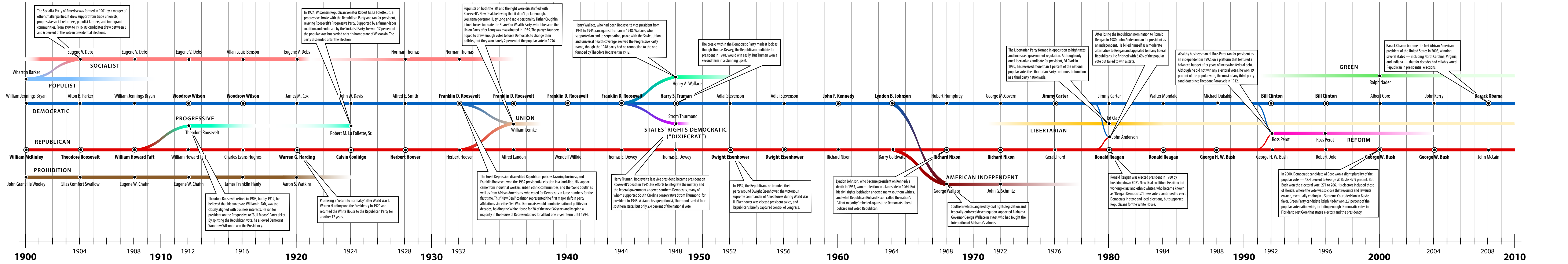
- Formed from former Whigs, Free-Soilers, and a few northern Democrats who opposed the expansion of slavery.
- Adopted much of the Whig platform, supporting industry and urban growth, education, and division of western lands into homesteads for farmers.
- Strongly nationalist, supporting unity and expansion of national interests.
- More likely to support moral reform, including Prohibition.
- Supported by a coalition of northern businessmen, skilled craftsmen, professionals, especially Catholics, and African Americans. (All male citizens were now constitutionally eligible to vote.)

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES, 1789–2010

This chart shows the evolution of political party systems in the U.S. since 1789. Each "party system" is a roughly defined time period in which two major political parties, each with fairly consistent supporters and beliefs, dominated the political scene. The colored lines represent organized parties that had a significant impact on national politics, electing members of Congress or receiving more than 1% of the vote for president. Where the lines merge and split, parties split or party affiliations changed dramatically in a short period of time. (Of course, people switch parties all the time, but we can't show that on the chart.)

Presidential candidates are also listed for each party, with the winning candidate in bold:

- John Adams Candidate for president
- **John Adams** Winning candidate for president



FOURTH PARTY SYSTEM (1896–1932)

The Republicans' victory in the election of 1896 began an era of Republican dominance that lasted for 36 years. The only Democratic president during that period, Woodrow Wilson, was elected when the Republican Party split in 1912. Voting blocs were essentially the same as in the third party system, with Republicans stronger than ever in the industrial North and winning support from people of all economic classes. Business interests dominated for most of this period, but the Progressive movement rose in response, demanding reforms

of industry and society. Reform had some support from both parties; the questions of how to promote business while reining in its abuses dominated domestic politics. The U.S. also became increasingly involved in international affairs, in the Caribbean, the Pacific, and in Europe during World War I. In the election of 1896, the Republicans spent unprecedented amounts of money and used new advertising techniques to reach voters. Their techniques of fundraising and advertising now became the norm for both parties.

DEMOCRATIC

- Effectively the only party in the "solid South," with African-Americans prevented from voting. After 1920, all men and women over 21 could vote, but blacks and Indians were often prevented from doing so.
- Still supported by farmers, especially in the West, but support dwindling in the Northeast.
- Southern influence meant support for economically conservative policies.
- Supported by most immigrant groups in northern cities, who favored pro-labor policies.

REPUBLICAN

- Included some Progressive reformers such as Theodore Roosevelt, but dominated by pro-business conservatives after World War I.
- Strongly nationalist, supporting unity and expansion of national interests, but opposed entry into World War I. Isolationist after the war.
- More likely to support moral reform, including Prohibition.
- Dominated politics in the 1920s after the failures of Woodrow Wilson's international policies.
- Strongly supported by women after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. All adults over the age of 21 were now constitutionally eligible to vote, but blacks and Indians were often prevented from doing so.

FIFTH PARTY SYSTEM (1932–1968)

The Great Depression discredited the Republican Party's support of business interests. In 1932, Democrat Franklin Roosevelt was elected president by working-class whites, African Americans, and southern whites. This "New Deal coalition" would keep the Democrats in power nationally for decades. Between 1932 and 1968, Republicans controlled the White House for only 8 years and the Senate for 2; they would not hold a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives again until 1994.

After World War II, both parties supported a strong national defense. The Republican Party was divided between moderate and conservative wings and did little to challenge the New Deal's social programs. But the New Deal coalition broke down in the 1960s, amid social turmoil, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War. Southern and working-class whites began voting for Republican candidates in national elections, and the Republican Party gradually grew more conservative.

DEMOCRATIC

- Effectively the only party in the "solid South" until the 1960s, when civil rights legislation enforced blacks' right to vote.
- Supported by most African Americans and "ethnic whites," the children and grandchildren of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.
- Supported regulation of business and social programs such as Social Security and Medicare, but Southern wing often countered liberal interests.
- National party supported civil rights for African Americans.
- Strongly supported by women after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. All adults over the age of 21 were now constitutionally eligible to vote, but blacks and Indians were often prevented from doing so.

REPUBLICAN

- Divided between moderate and conservative wings. Conservatives challenged New Deal social programs and "big government," but gained little popular support.
- Supported strong national defense during the Cold War but less internationalist than the Democrats.
- Opposed most civil rights legislation, though not necessarily racial equality.
- Only success in national elections came from public support for Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme commander of Allied forces in World War II.

1968—PRESENT

Historians disagree about when — or whether — the fifth political party system ended. Some argue that it broke down in 1968, when Republican Richard Nixon won the White House; others point to Reagan's election in 1980. Certainly by 1994, when Republicans swept to majorities in both houses of Congress, the parties had shifted. Republicans now dominate national elections in the South and mountain West, while Democrats win the Northeast and other urban areas. The two parties now are more clearly divided ideologically than they have been

since the Civil War. Republicans support strong national defense, low taxes, and small government, and prefer state power over federal power. Democrats support a strong and active national government and are more likely to support social programs and a progressive income tax to pay for them. As the ideological divisions between the parties have grown clearer, more and more money has been spent on elections, and political arguments have grown increasingly less civil. Yet more people than ever identify as independents.

DEMOCRATIC

- Support an active national government, regulation of business, social programs, civil rights legislation, and environmental protection. Supported by organized labor.
- More likely to support "progressive" social issues such as abortion rights and gay rights.
- Strongly supported by African Americans.
- Increasingly draw support from urban and heavily populated areas and from educated classes.

REPUBLICAN

- Support for strong national defense has helped Republican presidential candidates.
- Have supported deregulation of business, scaling back of social programs, and tax cuts. Generally prefer state power to national power.
- Supported by social conservatives, including a coalition of religious groups: oppose abortion and gay marriage.
- Increasingly supported by southern whites, working class whites, and people in rural areas.