

The background of the entire slide is a light blue color. It is decorated with various abstract geometric shapes in dark blue, white, and red. These shapes include rectangles, squares, and L-shaped blocks, some of which are outlined in a different color than their fill. For example, there are white blocks with blue outlines, blue blocks with white outlines, and red blocks with white outlines. The shapes are scattered across the slide, with a higher concentration of larger shapes in the lower half.

# THE **LOGIC** OF AMERICAN POLITICS

## Chapter 11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

**SAMUEL KERNELL**  
**GARY C. JACOBSON**  
**THAD KOUSSER**  
**LYNN VAVRECK**

**8<sup>th</sup>**  
EDITION



# Voting and Elections

## - Important Question -

- If Americans cherish the right to vote, why do so many neglect to exercise it?
- Key Website: <http://www.idea.int/themes/voter-turnout>

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Important Question -**

- Data on International Voter Turnout
- 2010 Congressional election:
  - 41.59% of registered voters
  - 38.46% of voting-age population
  - 2008: 64.36%
  - Germany 2009: 70.78%
  - Denmark 2010: 87.79%
  - Belgium 2010: 89.28%
  - Canada 2011: 61.41%
  - UK 2010: 65.77%

# Voting and Elections

## - Logic of Elections -

- American democracy is representative democracy.
- Madison stated the main differences between a democracy and a republic:
  - “...first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of the country, over which the latter may be extended.”

# Voting and Elections

## - Logic of Elections -

- Delegation of authority raises the possibility of agency loss:
  - one imperfect solution is
  - to hold regular, free, competitive elections

# Voting and Elections

## - Logic of Elections -

- Elections work to ameliorate this delegation problem.
  - They give ordinary citizens a say in who represents them.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Logic of Elections -**

- The prospect of future elections gives officeholders who want to keep or improve their jobs a motive to be responsive agents.
- Elections provide powerful incentives for the small set of citizens who want to replace the current officeholders to keep a close eye on representatives and to provide critical evaluations of them to the public at large.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Five Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences -**

- Stage 1: Early 1800s: Religious, property and tax qualifications begin to disappear in every State (universal white male suffrage by 1840s)
  - The property-less did not despoil the propertied.
  - The conformity cost most dreaded did not emerge



# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Five Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences -**

- Stage 2: 1870 15th amendment prohibits voting restrictions based on race or color
  - The 14th and 15th Amendments did not prevent a century of racial discrimination at the polls.
    - only the Voting Rights Act quickly and effectively achieved its goals

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Five Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences -**

- Stage 3: 1920 19th Amendment removes voting restrictions based on sex
  - Women did not alter the nature of politics. Indeed, no distinctive pattern of women's voting was evident until the 1980s.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Five Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences -**

- Stage 4: 1965 Voting Rights Acts enforces racial equality at polling places

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Five Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences -**

- Stage 5: 1971 26th Amendment sets the minimum voting age at 18
  - Also politically motivated: Fifteen-year olds old enough to fight, therefore old enough to vote
    - The only discernible consequence was the decline in voting that occurred when the right was extended to eighteen-, nineteen-, and twenty-year-olds.

# Voting and Elections

## -Who Uses the Right to Vote?-

- Most of us agree that the right to vote is the very essence of democracy.
- Yet millions of Americans do not vote. Is this irrational? Paradoxical?
  - not when you consider that the benefits of elections are collective benefits
  - people enjoy the payoffs even if they have not helped to produce them by voting

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Who Uses the Right to Vote?-**

- Universal suffrage gives leaders a reason to care about people's interests, opinions, and values.
  - We want that in a representative government.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Who Uses the Right to Vote?-**

- But while it makes sense to demand the vote, it also makes sense not to use the right.
  - A single vote is not likely to make much of a difference.

# Voting and Elections

## -Who Uses the Right to Vote?-

- Amazing outcome is that so many people actually do turn out to vote!
  - => Freerider problems are overcome.
- Same logic applies to gathering information about the competing candidates and parties if a person chooses to vote.
- The share of eligible voters who go to the polls has varied widely over American history.



# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Who Uses the Right to Vote?-**

- The most important contemporary change was the sharp decline in voter turnout between 1960 and 1972:
  - since then, an average of only about 58% of the eligible electorate has bothered to register and vote in presidential elections
  - even the hotly contested 2008 race inspired a turnout of only about 61%

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- Age and education have the strongest influence on voting.
- African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to vote (taking other factors into account), as are people who live in southern states or those that border southern states.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- People with deeper roots in their community vote more often as do those with internal and external efficacy.
- Turnout is higher in areas where there are fewer barriers to registration.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- Turnout is higher among people with stronger partisan views and electoral preferences.
- If one lives in an area with more active parties and more competitive elections, there is also an increased probability of voting.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- In terms of gender, men and women are equally likely to turn out and vote.
- The cynical and distrusting are as likely to vote as anyone else

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- Why do patterns emerge?
- Voting and other forms of political participation incur costs but produce benefits.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- People participate when they can meet the costs and appreciate the benefits.
- Those with money, education, experience, free time, and self-confidence find it easier to meet the costs, while those with a greater psychological stake receive greater benefits.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Individual Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- => Voting therefore rational for those who derive personal satisfaction from going to the polls. Expressing themselves through voting typically outweighs the modest costs of casting a ballot



# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Institutional Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- Differences in participation cannot be explained completely by individual differences in resources and psychological involvement, however.
- Institutional contexts (variation in registration laws, for example) affect turnout as well.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Institutional Factors Affecting Turnout -**

- Social circumstances also play a crucial part in stimulating turnout:
  - social connections help with efficacy levels, information, and contact with activists.
  - often people participate because they have been asked to do so.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- The Non-Representative Electorate -**

- The assorted demographic and institutional influences on voting produce an electorate in which:
  - Wealthy, well-educated, older white people are over-represented and poor, uneducated, young, and nonwhite people are under-represented.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- The Non-Representative Electorate -**

- People like this are more likely to be mobilized by parties, interest groups, and campaigns:
  - They are targeted as the cheapest to reach and the easiest to mobilize.
  - “the pressures that political leaders face to use their own resources most effectively build a class bias into their efforts to mobilize.” — Rosenstone and Hansen

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Variations in Turnout Over Time -**

- Earlier discussion focused on the factors that explain variations in participation among individuals, but what accounts for variations in turnout over time?

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Variations in Turnout Over Time -**

- Puzzling: While voter registration laws have eased and educational attainment has increased, why has voter turnout declined over time? These changes should have increased turnout.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Variations in Turnout Over Time -**

- While these two trends have had a positive effect on turnout, other factors have had the opposite effect:
  - extending the vote to eighteen-to-twenty-year-olds
  - lessening of community roots (increased mobility), lessening of political efficacy, lessening of partisan attachment

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Variations in Turnout Over Time -**

- The major reasons for the decline, however, are institutional:
- Fewer people voting because fewer people are being mobilized by parties, campaigns, and interest groups:
  - Most parties and candidates have replaced labor-intensive door-to-door campaigns with money-intensive television and direct-mail campaigns.
  - focus scarce resources on tightest races



# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Variations in Turnout Over Time -**

- Diminishment of Civil Rights movement to mobilize black voters.
- Diminishment of labor union movement and their efforts to union workers and their families.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Variations in Turnout Over Time -**

- Turnout is directly affected by the activities of political entrepreneurs pursuing offices or policies.
  - When their goals and tactics change, so does the level of electoral participation.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- Taxpayers partially finance presidential campaigns, but most of the money spent on congressional elections comes from private sources.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- Privately financed elections inevitably raise two related problems for American democracy:
  - Democracy demands political equality. But money is distributed very unequally, thus its role in electoral politics threatens democratic equality.
  - Privately financed elections raise the suspicion that elected officials will serve as the agents of their contributors rather than their constituents.
- Pursuit of money can subvert the very purpose of elections.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- Before the 1970s campaign money was effectively unregulated:
  - Congress had passed some limits on contributions and spending.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- As campaigns became more candidate-centered and broadcast campaigning became the standard, costs increased the demand for money, but many began to fear that winners would favor contributors over constituents.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- Congress responded to this situation with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, extensively amended in 1974.
  - This law provided partial public funding for presidential campaigns and required full public reporting of, and strict limits on, all contributions and expenditures in federal elections:
  - Established the Federal Election Commission.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) the Supreme Court upheld the reporting requirements and contribution limits, but rejected spending limits on the ground that they interfered with political speech.



# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- Concerned that spending limits were choking off traditional local party activity in federal elections, Congress liberalized FECA in 1979.
  - This amendment of the act allowed unrestricted contributions and spending for state and local party-building and get-out-the-vote activities (aka soft money).
  - 1996 Court decision gave party organizations the right to unfettered independent spending as well.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- In March of 2002 Congress passed a law prohibiting parties from raising and spending soft money for federal candidates:
  - the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act (BCRA)

# Voting and Elections

## -Regulating Campaign Money-

- Outcome of this law:
  - Huge increase in hard money raised by parties
  - Former soft money donors rerouted money into so-called 537 committees and 501(c) committees (“charitable” groups under the tax code who can finance campaigns if they maintain the fiction that they are merely informing voters, not advocating the election or defeat of particular candidates).

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- BCRA's attempt to limit independent campaigning by such groups was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2007.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **-Regulating Campaign Money-**

- In 2010 (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) the Court overturned precedent to invalidate any restriction on independent campaign spending by any organizations, including corporations and labor unions, based on First Amendment rights.

# **Voting and Elections**

## **- Regulating Campaign Money: Two Parallel Systems -**

### **Direct to Candidates**

- money going directly to candidates is subject to limits on the size of contributions and full disclosure of sources
- presidential candidates who accept public funds also must observe spending limits

### **Outside Spending**

- money raised and spent outside of the parties' and candidates' campaigns under the guise of soft money or issue advocacy
- is lightly regulated and not subject to limits