

THE ROLES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

There is no mention of political parties in the Constitution. George Washington believed that political parties would become divisive and should not be encouraged. In spite of these facts, the first “political parties” in the United States, *The Federalists* and *Anti-Federalist*, developed because of differing opinions over the ratification of the Constitution. Since these first groups formed, many other political parties have been created and these groups been influencing American politics – for better or worse – ever since.

PROVIDE THE PEOPLE WITH A CHOICE

- ✓ Each political party has different solutions for the nation’s problems.
- ✓ Which solutions are the ‘best fit’ for you? What makes the most sense?
- ✓ Candidates from each political party offer voters a choice of individuals that share their personal ideas on the *common welfare* of the country.

NOMINATE CANDIDATES

- ✓ Political parties encourage individuals to run for public office that share their ideas on what is best for their community / country.

CONTEST ELECTIONS

- ✓ Political parties offer support, advice, and money to help their candidates get elected.
- ✓ Parties organize and rally voters to support their candidate.
- ✓ Parties raise money to pay for a candidate’s campaign costs, like commercials and employees.

ORGANIZE THE GOVERNMENT

- ✓ Leadership within the *executive* and *legislative* branches is based on the party with the most members.
- ✓ President selects individuals from the same party to enforce the laws.
- ✓ The chair (leader) of each legislative committee is held by a member of the majority party.
- ✓ Which side of the Senate and House Chambers one’s desk is placed.

WATCH THE OTHER PARTY – “loyal opposition”

- ✓ Parties inform the public when the other party is doing “something bad” or influencing the government in a manner that hurts the *common welfare*.
- ✓ These ideas are “their opinion”, but are still an example of *checks and balances*.

POLITICAL ‘EDUCATION’

- ✓ Each party believes they have the best solutions to problems and are doing what is “right” for the common welfare.
- ✓ Beware of bias and *propaganda*! Parties often try to make their party look better by putting other parties down!

1874

CARTOON CHARACTERS

How one man's imagination turned politics into an animal farm.

In the years between the Civil War and the turn of the century, Thomas Nast was the nation's most influential political cartoonist. In fact, the influence of his powerful cartoons is still felt today.

Nast, a die-hard Republican, liked to use the jackass to portray Democratic policies he considered hotheaded or downright stubborn. When others picked up on the symbol, the Democrats tried to make the best of it, portraying themselves as donkeys, not asses.

A few weeks before election day in 1874, Nast drew a cartoon for *Harper's Magazine* in which he used a rogue elephant to represent Republican voters he felt were being panicked by phony charges from the Democrats. The cartoon was meant as a rebuke, but the idea of a pachyderm representing the GOP soon took on a life of its own.

The issues and controversies of those days have long since faded, but the elephant and donkey have proved amazingly resilient.



The German-born artist also helped shape our image of Santa Claus. Trying to capture the "jolly old elf" of Clement Moore's poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (" 'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house ..."), he created the face of Santa we've come to take for granted.