

A SUSPICION OF STRONG GOVERNMENT

- 1 The ideal of the free individual has had a profound effect on the way Americans view their government. Traditionally, there has been a deep suspicion that government is the natural enemy of freedom, even if it is elected by the people. The bigger and stronger the government becomes, the more dangerous many Americans believe it is to their individual freedom.*



The Signing of the Declaration of Independence, a painting by John Trumbull

- 2 This suspicion of strong government goes back to the men who led the American Revolution in 1776. These men believed the government of Great Britain wanted to discourage the freedom and economic opportunities of the American colonists by excessive taxes and other measures that would ultimately benefit the British aristocracy and monarchy. Thomas Paine, the famous revolutionary writer, expressed the view of other American revolutionists when he said, “. . . Government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable¹ one . . . ”

The Organization of the American Government

- 3 The way in which the national government is organized in the U.S. Constitution provides an excellent illustration of the American suspicion of governmental power. The provisions

of the Constitution are more concerned with keeping the government from doing evil than with enabling it to do good. The national government, for example, is divided into three separate branches. This division of governmental power is based on the belief that if any one part or branch of government has all, or even most of the power, it will become a threat to the freedom of individual citizens.

- 4 The legislative or lawmaking branch of the government is called the *Congress*. Congress has two houses—the Senate, with two senators from each state regardless of the size of its population, and the *House of Representatives*, consisting of a total of 435 representatives divided among the fifty states by population. (In the House, states with large populations have more representatives than states with small populations, while in the Senate, each state has equal representation.) The

* It is important to note that all 50 states have state governments, and within the states there are local governments at the city and/or county level, all of which have their own laws, police, and court systems. According to the Constitution, states have all powers not given to the national (or federal) government. If there is a conflict between a state law and a national law, the national law prevails.

¹ intolerable: too difficult, bad, or annoying to accept or deal with

president, or chief executive, heads the executive branch, which has responsibility to carry out the laws. The *Supreme Court* and lower national courts make up the judicial branch. The judicial branch settles disputes about the exact meaning of the law through court cases. It both interprets the law and determines whether the law is constitutional—that is, whether the law is permitted under the U.S. Constitution.

- 5 If any one of the three branches starts to abuse² its power, the other two may join together to stop it, through a system of *checks* and *balances*. The Constitution is most careful in balancing the powers of the legislative and executive branches of the government because these two (Congress and the president) are the most powerful of the three branches. In almost every important area of governmental activity, such as the power to make laws, to declare war, or to conclude treaties with foreign countries, the Constitution gives each of these two branches enough power to prevent the other from acting on its own.
- 6 Observers from other countries are often confused by the American system. The national government may seem to speak with two conflicting voices, that of the president and that of Congress. For example, a treaty with a foreign government signed by the president dies if the Senate refuses to *ratify* it—that is, if the Senate doesn't vote to accept it. The Senate has certain powers over foreign treaties and, with the House, military actions. This requires the president to have "the advice and consent of the Senate" before taking certain actions on the international front. The Senate also must approve all the members of the president's cabinet, such as the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.

² *abuse*: to deliberately use power or authority for the wrong purpose

³ *adjourns*: stops meeting for a short time

- 7 On the other hand, the president may prevent a bill passed by Congress from becoming law. When both houses of Congress have agreed on a piece of legislation or a resolution, it is sent to the president. The president has ten days to act, not counting Sundays. At that point, there are four possibilities:

1. The president agrees with the bill, signs it, and it becomes law.
2. The president disagrees with the bill, vetoes it, and sends it back to the Congress with his or her reasons for refusing to sign it. If two-thirds of both the House and the Senate vote to override the president's veto, the bill becomes law.
3. The president may take no action and after ten days (not counting Sundays), the bill becomes law without his signature.
4. If the Congress adjourns³ before the ten-day period is over, and the president has neither signed nor vetoed the bill, it is defeated. This is called a *pocket veto*. Presidents sometimes do this with bills they do not like but do not want to go on record as having vetoed.

- 8 Although the American system of divided governmental power strikes many observers as inefficient and even disorganized, most Americans still strongly believe in it for two reasons: (1) It has been able to meet the challenges of the past, and (2) it gives strong protection to individual freedoms.

- 9 In addition to dividing government powers into three branches, the Constitution includes a *Bill of Rights* that is designed to protect specific individual rights and freedoms from government interference. Some of the guarantees in the Bill of Rights concern the freedom of expression. The government may not interfere with an individual's freedom of speech or freedom

of religious worship, or the right to assemble (get together). The Bill of Rights also guarantees the right of a fair criminal procedure for those accused of breaking laws. These rights are sometimes called "due process." They include provisions that someone accused of a crime must be charged with the crime and is presumed innocent until proven guilty. The accused has the right to an attorney, and there must be a trial declaring someone guilty before punishment is given. Thus, the Bill of Rights is another statement of the American belief in the importance of individual freedom.

The Election of the President and the Congress

- 10 The president and both houses of Congress have almost complete political independence from each other because they are all chosen in separate elections. For example, the election of the Congress does not determine who will be elected president, and the presidential election does not determine who will be elected to either house of Congress. This system is quite different from the way a parliamentary system of government chooses a prime minister. Another difference is that there are only two important political parties in the United States: the Democrats, who are traditionally liberal or progressive, and the Republicans, who are more conservative. In parliamentary systems, there may be a number of significant political parties that must agree to form a government, while in the United States this is not the case. The president, the representatives, and the senators are all chosen by the American citizens in elections.
- 11 Because the elections of the president and members of the two houses of Congress
- 12 In order to understand what is happening in Washington, it is important to know not only the party of the president, but also which parties control the House and the Senate. Because both the House of Representatives and the Senate must agree on all legislation before it goes to the president, legislation may pass one house but be blocked in the other. Furthermore, the party in control of the House or Senate has the potential of changing every two years. Members of the House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms, while senators serve six-year terms. The Senate terms are staggered⁴ so that only one-third of the senators run for re-election each time the House elections are held, every two years.
- 13 Presidential elections are held every four years, on the first Tuesday in November.

⁴ staggered: arranged so that their terms of office (time serving as a senator or representative) do not all begin and end at the same time

When the Constitution was written, the founding fathers had a disagreement about how the president should be elected. Some did not want the members of Congress to choose the president, and others were afraid to leave the choice entirely to the voters. The result was a compromise—the electoral college, a system for indirectly electing the president. The system persists today. In presidential elections, people are actually voting for representatives called *electors*, and it is these electors who officially choose the president. With the electoral college system, the winner of the plurality⁵ (the highest number) of each state's popular votes gets all of that state's electoral votes, in most cases. (There are several exceptions.) The number of each state's electoral votes is equal to the total number of their representatives in the House and the Senate. Though the number of electoral votes varies according to each state's population, it is still possible for a person to be elected president without getting the highest number of the popular, or individual, votes.

- 14 Although Americans were aware of the electoral college system, the average voter did not give it much thought until the election of 2000. There had been only three previous instances of presidents ever losing the popular vote but winning the electoral vote, and it seemed a remote possibility. The last time it had happened was in 1888, when Benjamin Harrison won the presidency, even though Grover Cleveland had the majority of popular votes. All through the 1900s, the presidents who were elected had won at least a plurality, (the highest number of the popular votes), in addition to winning the electoral votes. However, in the election of 2000, Al Gore, the Democratic candidate, won more popular votes than George W. Bush, the Republican candidate, but Bush

won the most electoral votes and became president. (In the 2004 election between George W. Bush and John Kerry, the electoral college was not an issue, because Bush won both the popular vote and the electoral vote.)

- 15 The result of the election of 2000 sent shock waves through the American political system. One reason was that the vote was incredibly close, and several states had to count their votes a second time. The state with the most controversial results was Florida, where the governor of the state was Jeb Bush, George W. Bush's brother. Although Gore had won the popular vote nationwide, whoever won the twenty-five Florida electoral votes would win the election. The recounts of the votes in Florida showed Bush winning by fewer than 1,000 votes out of almost six million votes cast. After a series of legal challenges, the U.S. Supreme Court decided about a month after the election that the Florida state legislature had the right to stop recounting the ballots and certify the electoral votes. The Supreme Court ruled that a state has the ultimate right to determine how its electors are chosen.

The Ideal of the Free Individual

- 16 In the late 1700s, most Americans expected the new national government created by the Constitution to leave them alone to pursue their individual goals. They believed the central purpose of government was to create the conditions most favorable to the development of the free individual.
- 17 Before the Civil War of the 1860s, the American ideal of the free individual was the frontier settler and the small farmer. President Thomas Jefferson expressed this ideal when he said, "Those who labor in

⁵ *plurality: the number of votes received by the winning person in an election where there are three or more people trying to be elected*

the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people. . . ." Jefferson glorified farmers for being free individuals who relied on no one but themselves for their daily needs. Being dependent on none but themselves, farmers, he believed, were the most honest of citizens. Throughout his life Jefferson favored a small, weak form of government, which he believed would encourage the development of a nation of free, self-reliant farmer citizens.

- 18 From the end of the Civil War until the Great Depression of the 1930s, the successful businessperson replaced the farmer and the frontier settler as the ideal expression of the free individual. The prevailing view of Americans was that government should not interfere in business. If it were to do so, it would threaten the development of free individuals whose competitive spirit, self-reliance, and hard work were developing the United States into a land of greater and greater material prosperity.
- 19 Government, therefore, remained small and inactive in relation to the great size of the nation and the amount of power held by business corporations. Some government regulations were in place during this period, but these had only a small impact on business practices. From the 1870s until the 1930s, business organizations and ideas dominated American government and politics. During much of this time, the Republican Party was in power, and it strongly supported these policies.

The Development of Big Government

- 20 Traditionally, Republicans have favored letting businesses compete with little or no government regulation: Let the free enterprise system regulate itself in the marketplace. On the other hand, Democrats have traditionally favored using

government to regulate businesses, protect consumers and workers, and also to solve social problems. Not surprisingly, it was a Democratic president who presided over the creation of "big government."

- 21 The Great Depression of the 1930s greatly weakened the businessperson's position as the American ideal of the free individual, and big business lost respect. The Depression also created the need for emergency government action to help the needy on a scale never before seen in the United States in peacetime. As a result, the idea that government should be small and inactive was largely abandoned. Moreover, the ideal of the free individual underwent some very important changes.
- 22 The widespread unemployment and other economic hardships of the Depression gave rise to the new assumption⁶ that individuals could not be expected to rely solely on themselves in providing for their economic security. This new assumption, in turn, led to a large and active role for the national government in helping individuals meet their daily needs. The Democratic Party, led by President Franklin Roosevelt, brought about a number of changes in the 1930s, which he referred to as a "New Deal" for Americans.
- 23 Even with the return of prosperity after the Depression and World War II (1941–1945), the growth of government's role in helping to provide economic security for individuals did not end. It continued in the prosperous postwar years, and it was greatly expanded during the presidency of another Democrat, Lyndon Johnson, in the 1960s. Roosevelt's New Deal grew into what some saw as a permanent "welfare state" that provided payments for retired persons, government checks for the unemployed, support for families

⁶ assumption: something you think is true although you have no proof

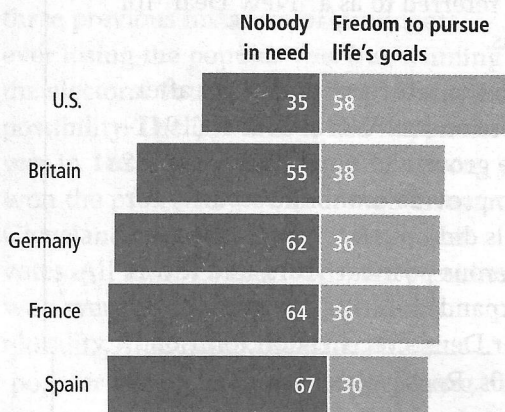
with dependent children and no father to provide income, health care for the poor and the elderly, and other government benefits. Johnson called the new welfare programs "The Great Society."

it is more important for everyone to be free to pursue their life's goals without interference from the state, while just 36% say it is more important for the state to play an active role in society so as to guarantee that nobody is in need.

The Controversy over Entitlements

- 24 The development of big government, and the establishment of government social programs, is not without controversy. On the one hand, some Americans fear that economic security provided by the government will weaken self-reliance, an ideal that is closely associated in the minds of Americans with individual freedom. At worst, it presents a danger to individual freedom by making an increasing number of Americans dependent on the government instead of on themselves. In this way, the strong traditions of individualism and self-reliance have made Americans less accepting of social programs than the citizens of other democracies such as those in Western Europe, which have more extensive social programs than those of the United States.
- 25 A Pew Research study reveals the contrast between European and American attitudes:

WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT



American opinions continue to differ considerably from those of Western Europeans when it comes to views of individualism and the role of the state. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) Americans believe

- 26 Americans generally are not in favor of European-style socialism that guarantees benefits for all who are needy. Indeed, some consider socialism a potentially dangerous, foreign economic system. Some conservatives have accused President Obama of being a socialist for some of his liberal stands. On the other hand, most Americans believe that their national government should provide some kind of "safety net" to take care of people in certain circumstances such as temporary loss of employment, damages from a natural disaster such as a hurricane, and of course retirement. It is interesting that the term for these benefits has changed. We used to make a distinction between welfare benefits and entitlements. Programs such as unemployment benefits, food stamps, and Medicaid (health care for the poor), were known as "welfare." Social Security and Medicare (health care for the retired) were seen as "entitlements," because working Americans and their employers pay into these systems. Therefore, when workers retire, they consider that they have paid for these benefits and they are entitled to them. Now the term welfare is almost never used, and all these government benefits are referred to as entitlements.

- 27 While most Americans would believe that the national government should provide them with some support, if they should need it, they may disagree about how much support and for how long. Democrats generally favor more generous support from the government than Republicans do. Republicans believe in a smaller role for the government and a greater emphasis on individual responsibility. During the 2012 election,

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney was overheard saying that 47 percent of Americans were dependent on government support and saw themselves as victims who could not take care of themselves:

There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what . . . who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims. . . . These are people who pay no income tax . . . and so my job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.

- 28 In fact, about half of all American households have someone who receives some aid from the federal government. However, this number includes people who are retired and are receiving Social Security and Medicare benefits, now about 14 percent of the population, plus another 2 percent who are receiving other Social Security benefits. Most Americans believe that they have earned the right to having Social Security and Medicare when they retire, but the problem is that these benefits now take about one-third of the federal budget.
- 29 As the population ages, there are fewer younger workers and their employers paying Social Security taxes into the system, and more retired workers taking money out. Americans are living longer in retirement, and their medical expenses are rising. Because older Americans are more likely than young people to vote, politicians pay particular attention to their needs. They want the older Americans' votes. However, as budget deficits⁷ grow, the reality is that some adjustments to all entitlements are likely to be needed, including Social Security and Medicare.

⁷ deficit: the difference between the amount of money that a government spends and the amount that it takes in from taxes and other activities

⁸ lobbying: trying to influence the government or someone with political power so that they make laws favorable to you

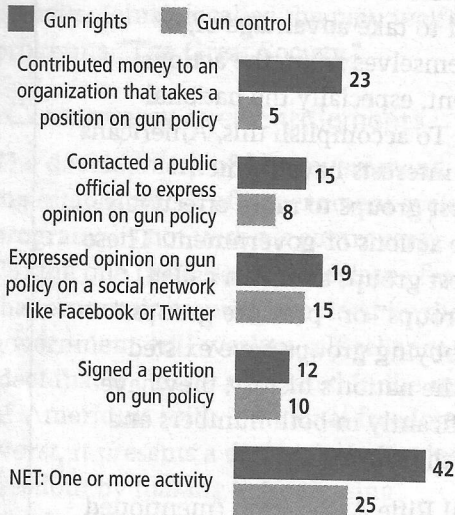
The Role of Special Interest Groups

30 Over time, practically all social and economic classes of Americans have seen the need to take advantage of, or to protect themselves from, the actions of government, especially the national government. To accomplish this, Americans with similar interests have formed special interest groups to more effectively influence the actions of government. These special interest groups are often called "lobbying⁸ groups" or "pressure groups." Although lobbying groups have existed throughout the nation's history, they have grown significantly in both numbers and power since the late 1900s.

31 The National Rifle Association (mentioned in Chapter 4) is an example of a powerful and effective lobby. Its members are mostly people who own guns for hunting, target practice, and personal protection. The NRA, however, receives a great deal of money from business corporations that manufacture guns. Because of the attitudes and interests of its members, the NRA strongly opposes almost all government restrictions on the sale of all handguns, rifles, shotguns, and even semi-automatic and assault weapons. Even though most of the general public favors some gun control measures, the NRA has always been able to block the passage of most gun-control legislation. (See poll on page 167.)

GUN RIGHTS PROPONENTS MORE POLITICALLY ACTIVE

Among those who prioritize . . .



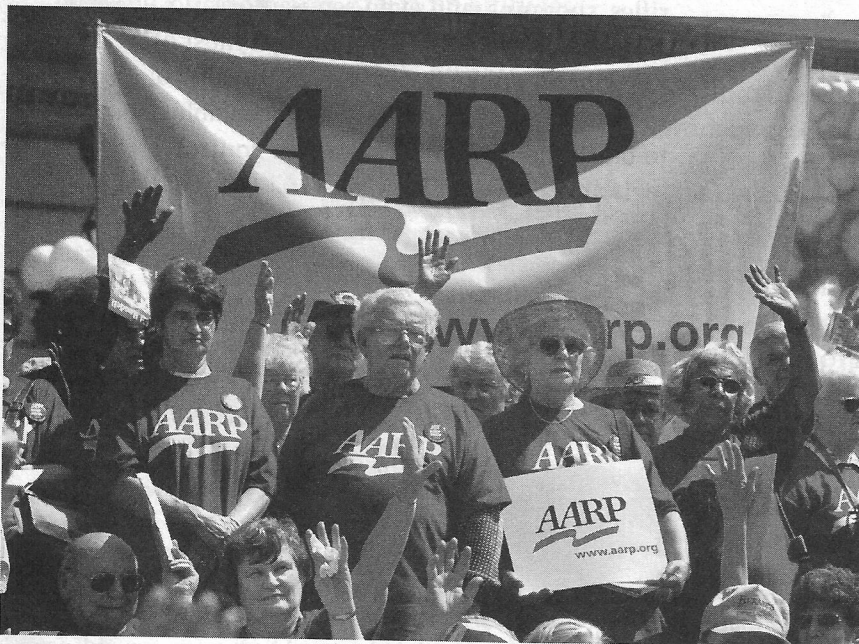
Source: Pew Research Center

32 Those who are concerned about the right to own guns are more likely to be politically active. The public sees both parties as being supportive of their views on gun control/gun rights—conservative Republicans are more concerned about their right to own guns, and liberal Democrats are more likely to favor stricter gun control laws.

33 Although few interest groups have been as successful as the NRA, most well-organized interest groups have achieved a large measure of success. By organizing into groups which put pressure on government officials, people can gain more rewards and avoid more government restrictions than if they tried to do it as individuals.

34 With this principle in mind, business interest groups have multiplied in recent decades so that most major trades, businesses, and even professions have their lobbyists in Washington. There are influential lobbies representing labor unions, farm groups, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and specific industries such as oil and natural gas, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology. Interest groups representing ethnic groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Jewish Americans have also expanded. There are also interest groups representing a variety of ideals or causes that want government support. These include groups pressing for a clean environment and those promoting greater protection for consumers. As one congressman exclaimed, "Everybody in America has a lobby!"

35 The political tendency of recent decades is for the size of the government to bring about an increase in the number and size of interest groups, and for the greater demands made on the government by interest groups to increase the size of the government. Groups such as the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) not only demand new government programs, regulations, and benefits for their members, they also strongly resist any



Interest groups represent a variety of populations in the United States.

attempts to reduce existing programs that they believe protect their interests, such as Social Security and Medicare. The result of this continuing cycle can be referred to as “interest group government.” No single interest dominates government and politics as business groups did before the Great Depression. Instead, government and politics are based on reaching compromises with a large number of groups and pleasing as many as possible.

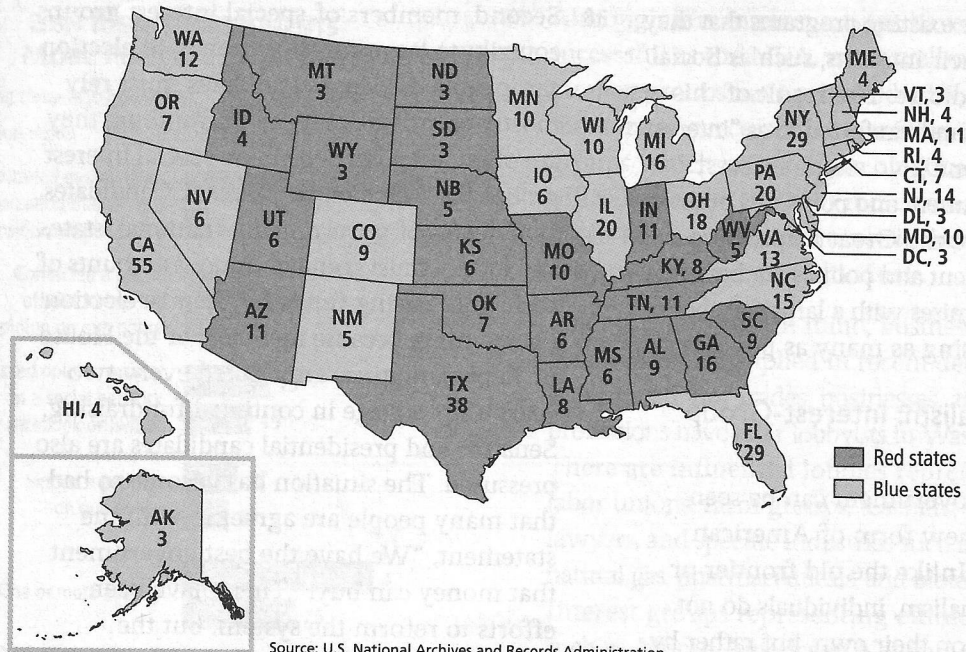
The New Individualism: Interest-Group Government

- 36 Interest-group government can be seen as expressing a new form of American individualism. Unlike the old frontier or business individualism, individuals do not claim to succeed on their own, but rather by forming groups to influence the government. Still, it is individuals, their rights, their interests, and their ambitions, not those of the nation as a whole, that are the focus of their attention. The interest group is no more than a tool to achieve the goals of the individual by influencing the government.
- 37 Although many Americans have benefited in some way from government-sponsored programs, some experts believe that interest-group government is harmful to the United States. The effect on politicians is enormous. First, interest groups often focus on one issue that is more important to their members than all others. For example, some people feel very strongly that abortion should not be legal in the United States. They may choose to vote for candidates primarily because of their stand on the abortion issue. Generally, because their members feel so strongly, lobby groups are able to promise that their members will vote for a candidate if he or she promises to support their issue once elected. The NRA gives members of Congress grades for their voting record on gun control, and it has been particularly effective in re-electing or defeating senators and representatives.

- 38 Second, members of special interest groups contribute large sums of money to election campaigns. Because candidates must rely mostly on private, not public, funding, they are often forced to depend on special interest groups for their campaign funds. Candidates at all levels of government—national, state, and local—must spend enormous amounts of their time raising funds for their re-election. For example, because members of the House of Representatives are elected every two years, they engage in continual fundraising. Senators and presidential candidates are also pressured. The situation has become so bad that many people are agreeing with the statement, “We have the best government that money can buy!” There have been efforts to reform the system, but the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision in 2010 ruled that corporations, individuals, and labor unions could make unlimited contributions to political campaigns through Super PACs (Political Action Committees). In the presidential election of 2012, Super PACs spent over \$524 million, according to the Federal Election Commission.

The Political Landscape in the 2000s: Red States vs. Blue States

- 39 In reporting the results of presidential elections, TV news reports show the map of the United States with red states (awarding the state’s electoral votes to the Republican candidate), and blue states (giving the electoral votes to the Democratic candidate). These colors have come to symbolize the deep divisions in America. In Obama’s first national speech at the Democratic Convention in 2004, he offered his vision of a country where we are not red states or blue states—we are one people—the United States of America. But the divisions persist.
- 40 In *Barack Obama and the New America: The 2012 Election and the Changing Face of Politics*, Alan Abramowitz says the American voters are strongly divided



along party lines. In an unusually partisan election, over 90 percent of the Democrats voted for Obama, and over 90 percent of the Republicans voted for Romney. Even the Independents, now about one-third of the electorate, were split 50/50 Obama/Romney. Also, more than 90 percent of voters chose their House or Senate representatives according to their party. Abramowitz says that this unusual degree of party loyalty reflects the deep divisions in American society:

A close examination of the voting patterns in 2012 demonstrates the existence of three major divisions between Democrats and Republicans—a racial divide between a Democratic Party increasingly dependent on votes from non-whites and an overwhelmingly white Republican Party, an ideological divide over the role and size of government, and a cultural divide over values, morality, and lifestyle.

41 *First, the racial divide.* Barack Obama's winning the presidency in 2008 was truly a historical event. For the first time ever, the United States had an African-American president. The Democrats had

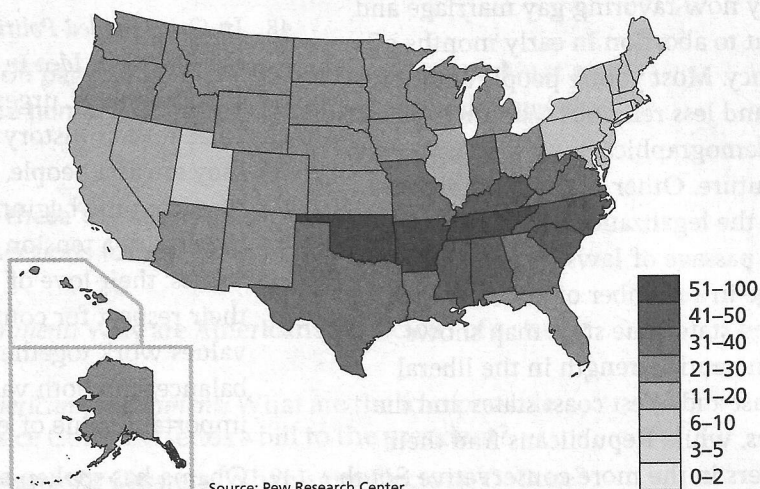
traditionally had more support from non-white Americans than the Republicans, but this election brought people of all races together behind a candidate that promised "hope and change"—an America where the ultimate American Dream could come true. Some believed that it was a fluke,⁹ something that happens only by chance or luck. But Obama captured the imagination of millions of Americans. Young voters were energized for the first time since the anti-war movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, and also for the first time, social media played an important role. Obama built a grass-roots organization where his campaigners came to know potential voters personally, and many Americans felt like they were part of history. Well over a million people stood outside in the freezing weather on the Washington, D.C., Mall in January, 2009, to watch Obama's inauguration on huge TV screens.

42 Obama's re-election in 2012 proved that his winning in 2008 was not a fluke. Obama lost a number of white voters, but

⁹fluke: something that only happens because of chance or luck

his coalition of non-white voters held. By 2012, 28 percent of the voting public were non-white: African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and other non-whites. Republicans were greatly surprised by Obama's victory and realized that it reflected a new reality in the United States: In spirit, the country has already become the multi-racial, multicultural country the demographers predicted for 2050. We do not have to wait thirty or forty years to see the political effects of being a majority-minority country—the demographic shift is already affecting elections. The Republican Party is in search of a new direction. Because the Republican Party hopes to attract new voters, it will have to appeal to Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, and other non-white voters. The color of the electoral map is also changing, as Democratic Hispanic populations in states such as New Mexico, Colorado, and Nevada are starting to turn these red states blue.

PERCENTAGE OF EACH STATE'S POPULATION THAT AFFILIATES WITH EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT TRADITION



Source: Pew Research Center

- 43 *Second, the ideological divide over the role and size of the national government.* Republicans have traditionally believed that big government is not only inefficient, it also endangers individual rights and freedoms. In 2012, the Tea Party* pushed the Republican Party more to the very conservative right, insisting that government spending is the cause of all economic problems and demanding severe budget cuts. Romney campaigned on a plan to reduce huge budget deficits through significant cuts in social programs; the elimination of many health, safety,

and environmental regulations; and the repeal of the Obama health care law, while cutting taxes on upper income households and corporations. Obama and the Democrats called for more government regulation of financial institutions and corporate polluters, higher taxes on upper income Americans to fund social programs, and full implementation of the new health care law.

- 44 *Third, the cultural divide over values, morality, and lifestyles.* Republicans have increasingly built an alliance with religious conservatives of all faiths, particularly evangelical Christians. Republicans have become associated with traditional values and lifestyles, such as limiting access to abortions and opposition to gay marriage and other rights for homosexuals. They have also been against some birth control methods, including the “morning after” pill. In the meantime, the Democratic Party has moved further left on these issues. Obama allowed gays to serve openly in the military, and he called for gays’ right to marry and other minority rights in his second inaugural address.

*The Tea Party is a very conservative grass-roots movement originally organized by people who were worried about growing government debt (the amount of money owed). The name refers to the Boston Tea Party when American colonists threw tea into the Boston Harbor to protest the British tax on tea.

45 The country as a whole has become more liberal on these social issues, with a majority now favoring gay marriage and the right to abortion in early months of a pregnancy. Most young people are more liberal and less religious than their parents, so the demographics favor the Democrats in the future. Other lifestyle differences include the legalization of marijuana and the passage of laws recognizing gay marriage in a number of states. A look at the red state/blue state map shows the Democratic strength in the liberal Northeast and West coast states and the big cities, while Republicans find their supporters in the more conservative South and in rural areas.

Finding the Way Forward

46 Both the Republicans and the Democrats truly believe that they have the roadmap that will lead the United States to a safe and prosperous future. Republicans believe the country's economic difficulties are due to a spending problem, while Democrats believe it is an income problem. Republicans believe that dependence on entitlements seriously weakens individual freedom and responsibility. They believe that Americans are living beyond their means, borrowing money they need to run a larger and larger government, and creating a terrible financial burden for their children and grandchildren.

47 Democrats are concerned about the widening gap between those who are very, very wealthy and those who are very, very poor. They believe that the government can protect individual freedom by passing laws that ensure equal access to health care and jobs for all Americans, and by showing the way forward with government programs that will engage private businesses in cooperative projects to rebuild needed infrastructure, roads and bridges, and create partnerships between

schools and businesses to provide the educated workforce of the future.

48 In *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*, E.J. Dionne, Jr. urges Americans to look back at their history to understand who they are as a people. They must recognize that from the beginning, Americans have lived with a tension between two core values: their love of individualism and their respect for community. These two values work together to give the nation balance, and both values interact with the important value of equality.

49 Obama has spoken about this need for balance between the individualism of private business and the community of common government:

From our first days as a nation, we have put our faith in free markets and free enterprise as the engine of America's wealth and prosperity. More than citizens of any other country, we are rugged individualists, a self-reliant people with a healthy skepticism of too much government.

But there has always been another thread running throughout our history—a belief that we are all connected; and that there are some things we can only do together, as a nation. . . . The America I know is generous and compassionate; a land of opportunity and optimism. We take responsibility for ourselves and each other; for the country we want and the future we share.

50 Obama is expressing a belief in the role traditional American values play in the nation and its government. The twenty-first century will continue to offer challenges to the United States citizens and its government leaders. Hopefully, the six basic cultural values—individual freedom, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, competition, material wealth, and hard work will continue to guide and direct the United States and its people in the future.