13

The Campaign Process

President Barack Obama faced no internal challenges for the Democratic nomination for president in 2012. This gave President Obama an immediate advantage in the presidential election because he did not have to focus his efforts on competition within the party. As a result, he was able to build on the successful infrastructure he had created in 2008 and focus his efforts on fundraising and building an on-the-ground game, particularly in swing states.

On the Republican side, more than ten candidates engaged in a several month-long primary battle. At various points, former Senator Rick Santorum, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and a range of other candidates, including Herman Cain and Michele Bachmann were the frontrunners for the nomination. In April 2012, at long last, the GOP chose former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. If there was residual angst in the Republican Party over Governor Romney's selection to fill the top spot on the GOP ticket, it seemed to fade after the selection of Representative Paul Ryan as Romney's running mate. Following the party's convention, Republicans appeared to unite in their efforts to hold President Obama to a single term as president.

With the economy as the dominant issue, both candidates emphasized experience as the key to being successful over the next four years. The President claimed his leadership was responsible for getting the nation's economy back on track, while Mitt Romney argued that there had been little improvement and touted his experience as a successful businessman as key selling points with voters.

The election, ultimately, would turn on the question of whether the American people believed conditions were getting better or worse. Would they blame the sitting president for the nation's problems and turn him out of office in favor of a candidate with business experience, or would they trust that the president was delivering and moving forward, albeit slowly, on his promise of "Change" four years earlier?

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS LEAVE INDELIBLE MARKS ON THE NATION Above, Theodore Roosevelt gives a campaign speech from the back of a train in 1912. Below, President Barack Obama celebrates his 2012 reelection with his wife, Michelle, and daughters, Sasha and Malia.

nomination campaign
Phase of a political campaign aimed at winning a primary election.

Both campaigns vigorously pursued electors in all key battleground states, and both campaigns included grassroots organizing in all fifty states, relying on extensive use of technology and social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and emails. Romney's campaign banked on a strategy that would require him to win back many of the states that Obama took in 2008 but that George W. Bush had carried in 2004. These included states like Indiana, as well as key swing states such as Virginia, Ohio, Colorado, Nevada, New Hampshire and North Carolina.

Obama's campaign believed that if they could convince voters to turn out and support them as they had in 2008, the path to reelection would be smooth. This strategy proved successful when, on Election Day, the Obama campaign held together a coalition of women, African Americans, Hispanics, and young voters to secure a second term for the president.

With the exception of Indiana and North Carolina, which supported Mitt Romney, Obama carried every other state he had won in 2008. Shortly before midnight, networks projected Ohio for the Democrats and Obama secured the necessary 270 Electoral College votes to be declared the winner of the 2012 presidential election.

Ultimately, after securing victory in Florida on the Saturday after the election, President Obama won a total of 332 votes in the Electoral College to Romney's 206. Although many Democrats claimed this significant victory in the Electoral College gave the president a mandate for his second term in office, Republicans pointed to Obama's comparatively smaller margin of victory—3 percent—in the popular vote and asserted that Americans were more divided than the Electoral College results indicated.

•••

Modern political campaigns have become high-stakes, high-priced extravaganzas, but the basic purpose of modern electioneering remains intact: one person asking another for support. The art of modern campaigning involves the management of a large budget and staff, the planning of sophisticated voter outreach efforts, and the creation of high-tech Internet and social media sites that provide continuous communication updates and organize voter and donor support. Campaigning also involves the diplomatic skill of unifying disparate individuals and groups to achieve a fragile electoral majority. How candidates perform these exquisitely difficult tasks is the subject of this chapter.

Roots of Modern Political Campaigns

13.1 Trace the evolution of political campaigns in the United States.

Campaigns are dynamic, unpredictable, and exciting. No two political campaigns are the same. Despite the unique qualities of each race, however, most electoral contests are similar in structure, consisting of a nomination campaign and a general election campaign.

The Nomination Campaign

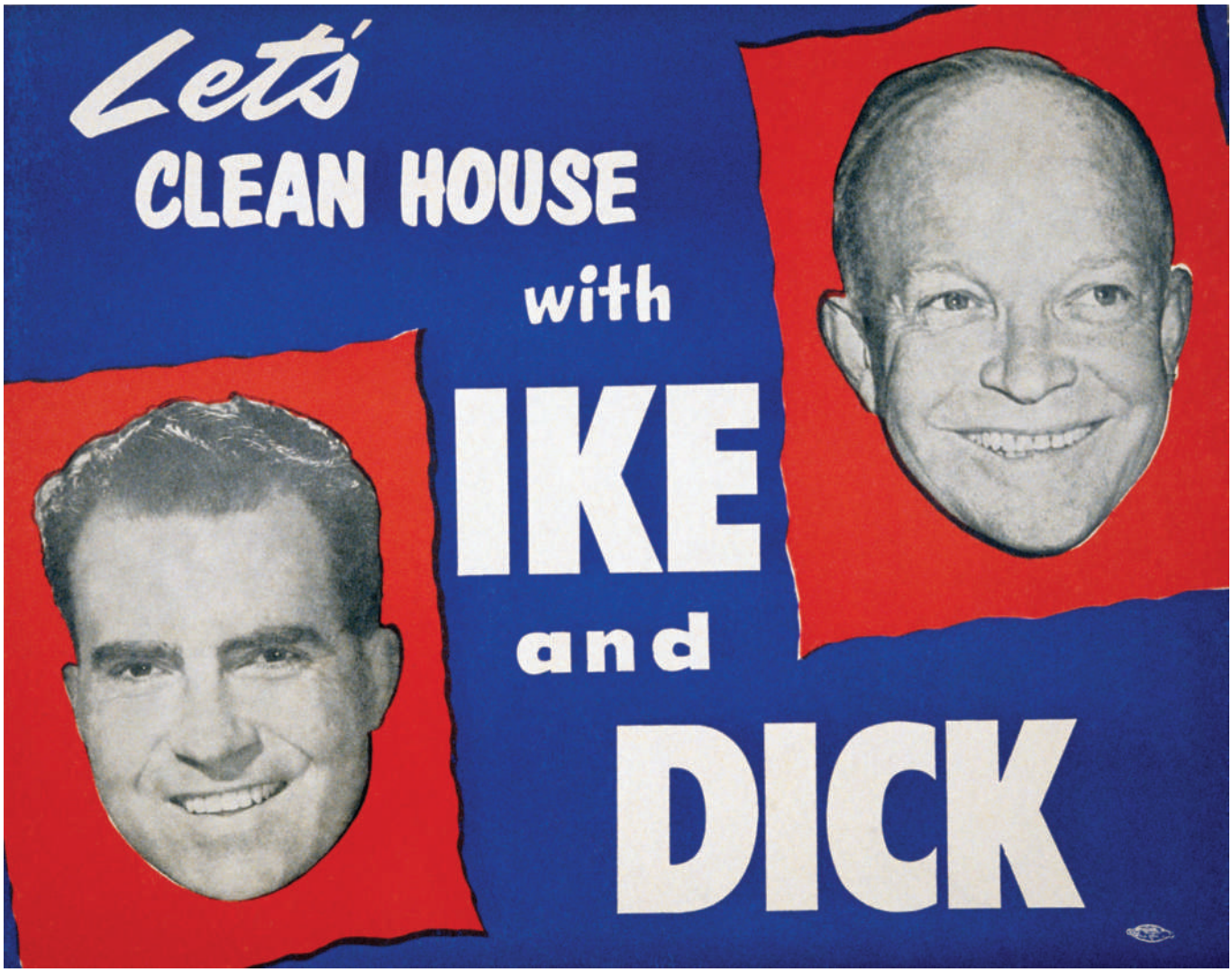
The **nomination campaign**, the phase of a political campaign aimed at winning a primary election, begins as soon as the candidate has decided to run for office. This may be years prior to the actual election. During the nomination campaign, the candidates target party leaders and interest groups. They test out themes, slogans, and strategies, and learn to adjust to the pressure of being in the spotlight day in and day out. This is the time for candidates to learn that a single careless phrase could end the campaign or guarantee a defeat. The press and public take much less notice of gaffes at this time than they will later, in the general election campaign.

A danger not always heeded by candidates during the nomination campaign is that, in the quest to win the party's nomination, a candidate can move too far to the right or left and appear too extreme to the electorate in November. Party activists are generally more ideologically extreme than party-identified voters in the general electorate, and activists participate in primaries and caucuses at a relatively high rate. If a candidate tries too hard to appeal to the interests of party elites, he or she jeopardizes the ultimate goal of winning the election. Conservative Barry Goldwater, the 1964 Republican nominee for president, and liberal George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic nominee for president, both fell victim to this phenomenon in seeking their party's nomination—Goldwater going too far right, and McGovern going too far left—and they were handily defeated in the general elections by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon, respectively.

general election campaign
Phase of a political campaign aimed at winning election to office.

The General Election Campaign

After earning the party's nomination, candidates embark on the **general election campaign**, or the phase of a political campaign aimed at winning election to office. Unlike the nomination campaign, in which candidates must run against members of their own political party, during the general election campaign, candidates in partisan elections



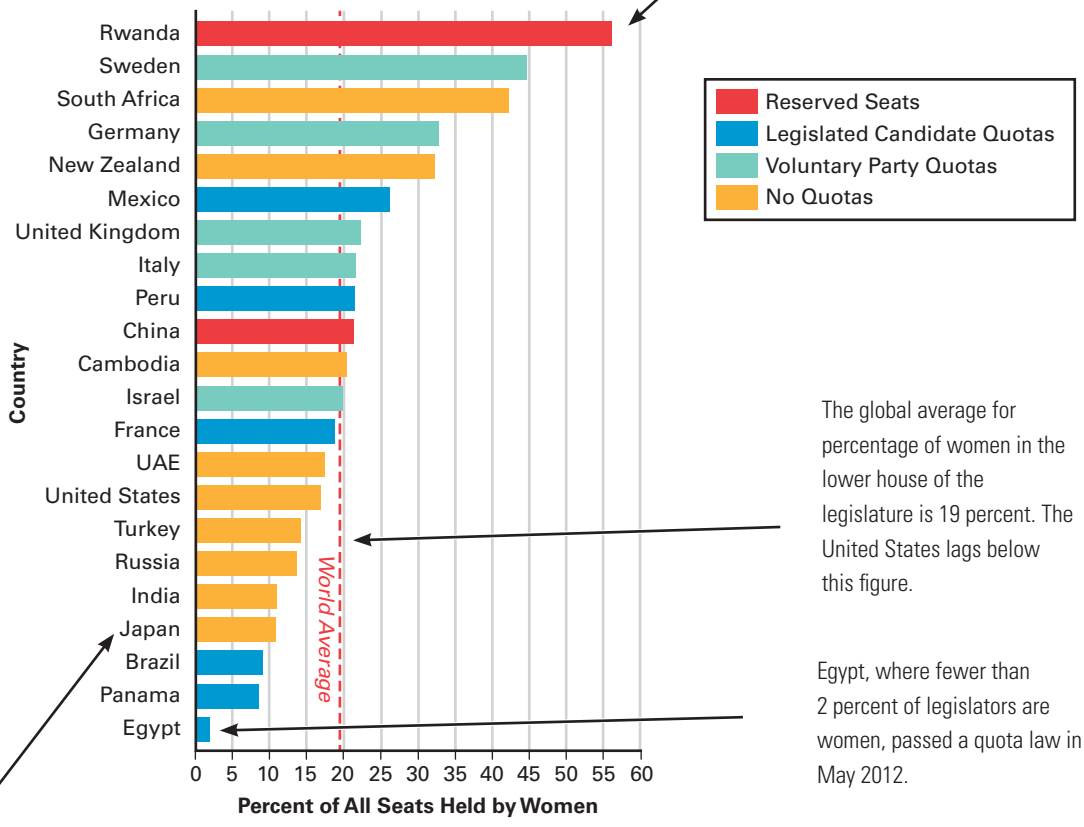
WHY ARE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS IMPORTANT?

Political campaigns help voters to make informed choices on Election Day. They do this through a complex set of political tools, including media signs and slogans. Here, a sign encourages voters to endorse Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon for president and vice president, respectively, in 1952.

Explore Your World

Political candidates ultimately become lawmakers and policy makers. As a result, many states around the world have identified a need to make their candidate pools more representative of the country's population at large. One way of achieving this goal is by adopting quotas that mandate a certain percentage of candidates come from traditionally underrepresented groups, such as women or ethnic or religious minorities. Examine the chart below to consider whether candidate quotas translate into greater representation in government; this example focuses on women as candidates and members of the lower house of each country's legislature.

Women played an active role in writing the Rwandan constitution adopted after the late 1990s genocide. They demanded that seats be reserved for women in the legislature; today Rwanda has the highest percentage of female lawmakers in the world.



The global average for percentage of women in the lower house of the legislature is 19 percent. The United States lags below this figure.

Egypt, where fewer than 2 percent of legislators are women, passed a quota law in May 2012.

Japanese women lag behind their male counterparts in both public and private leadership positions. The government has recently considered adopting quota laws to narrow these gaps.

SOURCE: "Focus: Women in Parliament," *The Economist* (May 9, 2012): http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/05/focus-1; The Quota Project, www.quotaproject.org. Data as of March 31, 2012.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Does there appear to be a relationship between quota laws and percentages of women in government?
2. How might quota laws improve the representation of women's issues in government and politics? In what ways might they be ineffective?
3. Should the United States adopt a law requiring that a certain percentage of political candidates be women? Why or why not?

run against nominees from other political parties. All eligible voters, regardless of political party, have the opportunity to vote in these elections. For this reason, most political scientists suggest that candidates running in general elections have an incentive to move their positions on political issues toward the ideological center. These scholars argue that candidates representing the two major parties are unlikely to lose the votes of party loyalists. The citizens whose votes are "up for grabs" are often political moderates, and choosing middle-of-the-road positions on controversial issues may help to attract the votes of these individuals.

The length of the general election campaign varies widely from state to state, depending on the date of the primary elections. In states that hold primary elections in January, the general election campaign can be quite long. However, in states that hold primary elections in September, the general election campaign is quite short. The length of this campaign season affects how candidates structure their campaigns, how they raise money, whom they meet along the campaign trail, and even their advertising strategies.

Assembling a Campaign Staff

13.2 Assess the role of candidates and their staff in the campaign process.

Candidates are the center of political campaigns. While a candidate may not make all of the decisions, or even have the expertise or knowledge to handle the wide variety of issues and concerns that affect the campaign, it is ultimately the candidate's name that appears on the ballot. And, on Election Day, voters hold only the candidate truly accountable.

Candidates employ a wide variety of people to help them run an effective campaign. Most candidates for higher offices hire a campaign manager, finance chair, and communications staff. They may also contract the assistance of a variety of political consultants. In addition, candidates rely on networks of grassroots volunteers to spread the campaign's message and to get out the vote.

The Candidate

Before there can be a campaign, there must be a candidate. Candidates run for office for any number of reasons, including personal ambition, the desire to promote ideological objectives or pursue specific public policies, or simply because they think they can do a better job than their opponents.[1] In any case, to be successful, candidates must spend a considerable amount of time and energy in pursuit of their desired office, and all candidates must be prepared to expose themselves and often their families to public scrutiny and the chance of rejection by the voters.

In an effort to show voters they are hardworking, thoughtful, and worthy of the office they seek, candidates try to meet as many citizens as possible in the course of a campaign. To some degree, such efforts are symbolic, especially for presidential candidates, since it is possible to have direct contact with only a small fraction of the millions of people who are likely to vote in a presidential contest. But, one should not discount the value of visiting numerous localities both to increase media coverage and to motivate local activists who are working for the candidate's campaign.

Thus, a typical candidate maintains an exhausting schedule. The day may begin at 5:00 a.m. at the entrance gate to an auto plant with an hour or two of handshaking, followed by similar glad-handing at subway stops until 9:00 a.m. Strategy sessions with key advisers and preparation for upcoming presentations and forums may fill the rest of the morning. A luncheon talk, afternoon fundraisers, and a series of media interviews crowd the afternoon agenda. Cocktail parties are followed by a dinner speech, perhaps telephone or neighborhood canvassing of voters, and a civic

campaign manager
The individual who travels with the candidate and coordinates the campaign.

forum or two. Meetings with advisers and planning for the next day's events can easily take a candidate past midnight. After only a few hours of sleep, the candidate starts all over again.

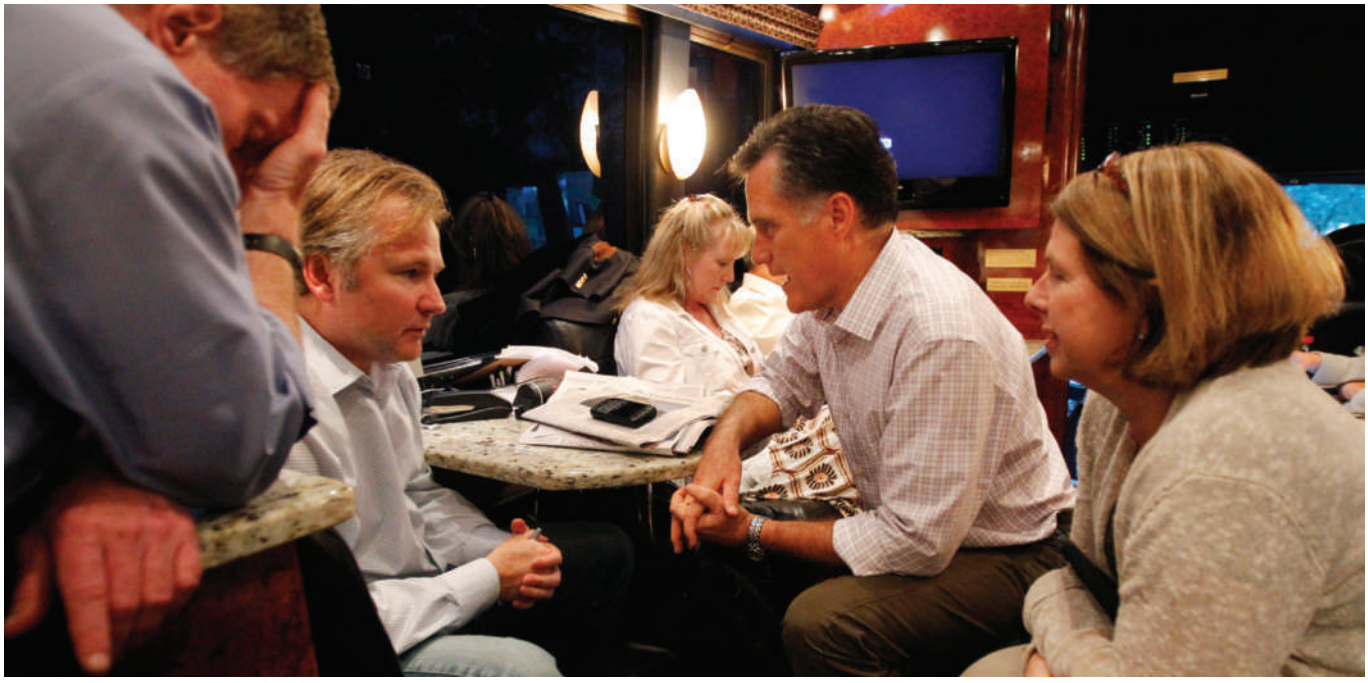
The hectic pace of campaigning can strain the candidate's family life and leaves little time for reflection and long-range planning. After months of this grueling pace, candidates may be functioning on automatic pilot and often commit gaffes, from referring to the wrong city's sports team to fumbling an oft-repeated stump speech. Candidates also are much more prone to lose their tempers, responding sharply to criticism from opponents and even the media when they believe they have been characterized unfairly. These frustrations and the sheer exhaustion only get worse when a candidate believes he or she is on the verge of defeat and the end of the campaign is near.

The Campaign Staff

Paid staff, political consultants, and dedicated volunteers work behind the scenes to support the candidate. Collectively, they plan general strategy, conduct polls, write speeches, craft the campaign's message, and design a communications plan to disseminate that message in the form of TV advertisements, radio spots, Web sites, and direct mail pieces. Others are responsible for organizing fund-raising events, campaign rallies, and direct voter contacts.

It is important to note that the campaign staff varies significantly in size and nature, depending on the type of race. Presidential, senatorial, and gubernatorial races employ large professional staffs and a number of different consultants and pollsters. In contrast, races for state legislatures will likely have only a paid campaign manager and rely heavily on volunteer workers (see Figure 13.1).

CAMPAIGN MANAGER A **campaign manager** runs nearly every campaign at the state and national level. The campaign manager travels with the candidate and coordinates the campaign. He or she is the person closest to the candidate who makes the essential day-to-day decisions, such as whom to hire and when to air TV and radio



WHAT ROLE DO CAMPAIGN STAFF PLAY?

Staff assist the candidate with much of the day-to-day work of running a political campaign. Here, 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney holds a meeting on his campaign bus with senior advisors Stuart Stevens and Eric Ferhnstrom and campaign manager Beth Myers.

finance chair
The individual who coordinates the financial business of the campaign.

FIGURE 13.1 HOW IS A CAMPAIGN STAFF ORGANIZED?

Presidential candidates have large staffs that help them run the day-to-day operations of their lengthy campaigns to be the chief executive of the United States. Among these officers are the campaign manager, finance chair, communications director, and a large number of professional political consultants. The diagram above shows the staff of the 2012 Barack Obama campaign.

SOURCE: Updated with data from http://www.p2012.org/candidates/obamaorg.html.

advertisements. The campaign manager also helps to determine the campaign's overall strategy and works to keep the campaign on message throughout the race. He or she works directly for the campaign; therefore, campaign managers can usually run only one campaign during a given election cycle. In some cases, the campaign manager may be the only full-time employee of the campaign.

FINANCE CHAIR The major role of the **finance chair** is to coordinate the financial efforts of the campaign. This job includes raising money, keeping records of funds

communications director
The person who develops the overall media strategy for the candidate.

press secretary
The individual charged with interacting and communicating with journalists on a daily basis.

campaign consultant
A private-sector professional who sells to a candidate the technologies, services, and strategies required to get that candidate elected.

pollster
A campaign consultant who conducts public opinion surveys.

voter canvass
The process by which a campaign reaches individual voters, either by door-to-door solicitation or by telephone.

get-out-the-vote (GOTV)
A push at the end of a political campaign to encourage supporters to go to the polls.

received and spent, and filing the required paperwork with the Federal Election Commission, the bureaucratic agency in charge of monitoring campaign activity. As the cost of campaigns has risen and fund-raising has become more important, the finance chair has also grown in prestige and significance. Although a volunteer accountant may fill the role of finance chair in state and local elections, candidates for most federal offices hire someone to fill this position.

COMMUNICATIONS STAFF A **communications director**, who develops the overall media strategy for the campaign, heads the communications staff. It is the communications director's job to stay apprised of newspaper, TV, radio, and Internet coverage, as well as supervise media consultants who craft campaign advertisements. Coordinating these many media sources can be challenging, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

In many campaigns, the communications director works closely with the **press secretary**, who interacts and communicates with journalists on a daily basis and acts as the spokesperson for the campaign. It is the press secretary's job to be quoted in news coverage, to explain the candidate's issue positions, and to react to the actions of opposing candidates. He or she also has the job of delivering bad news and responding to attacks from opponents or interest groups. (It is better not to have the candidate doing the dirty work of the campaign.)

An increasingly significant part of the campaign's communications staff is the Internet team, which manages the campaign's online communications, outreach, and fund-raising. Members of the Internet team post on blogs advocating for the candidate and create candidate profiles on social networking sites. They may organize Web chats or real-world meet-ups and grassroots events. They also act as important liaisons with the campaign's volunteers.

CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS **Campaign consultants** are the private-sector professionals and firms who sell the technologies, services, and strategies many candidates need to get elected. The number of consultants has grown exponentially since they first appeared in the 1930s, and their specialties and responsibilities have increased accordingly, to the point that campaign consultants are now an important part of many campaigns at the state and national level.[2]

Candidates generally hire specialized consultants who focus on only one or two areas, such as fund-raising, polling, media relations, Internet outreach, and speech writing. Media consultants, for example, design advertisements for distribution on TV, the Internet, radio, billboards, and flyers. They work with the communications director to craft the campaign's message and spin key issues.

Pollsters, on the other hand, are campaign consultants who conduct public opinion surveys. These studies gather opinions from a candidate's potential constituents. They are useful because they can tell a candidate where he or she stands relative to opponents, or can provide useful information about the issues and positions important to voters. Pollsters may also work with the media staff to gauge the potential impact of proposed radio or TV advertisements.

VOLUNTEERS Volunteers are the lifeblood of every national, state, and local campaign. Volunteers answer phone calls, staff candidate booths at festivals and county fairs, copy and distribute campaign literature, and serve as the public face of the campaign. They go door to door to solicit votes, or use computerized telephone banks to call targeted voters with scripted messages, two basic methods of **voter canvass**. Most canvassing, or direct solicitation of support, takes place in the month before the election, when voters are most likely to be paying attention. Closer to Election Day, volunteers begin vital **get-out-the-vote (GOTV)** efforts, contacting supporters to encourage them to vote and arranging for their transportation to the polls if necessary. In recent years, the Internet and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have been important tools used by volunteers to get out the vote and energize supporters.

Raising Money

13.3 Evaluate the ways campaigns raise money.

Successful campaigns require a great deal of money. In 2012, for example, nearly $2 billion was raised by the Democratic and Republican Parties. Presidential candidates raised nearly $1 billion in additional support for their campaigns. And, candidates for the Senate raised $644 million. Candidates for the House, in contrast, raised over $1 billion. Recall, however, that there are more candidates for House than Senate.[3]

Efforts to regulate this type of campaign spending are nothing new. They are also far from settled. As spending from individuals, political parties, political action committees (PACs), and other sources continues to rise, it is likely that calls for reform will also continue. The sections that follow detail the current regulations and their implications for candidates running for political office.

Regulating Campaign Finance

The United States has struggled to regulate campaign spending for well over one hundred years. One early attempt to regulate the way candidates raise campaign resources was enacted in 1883, when Congress passed civil service reform legislation that prohibited solicitation of political funds from federal workers, attempting to halt a corrupt and long-held practice. In 1907, the Tillman Act prohibited corporations from making direct contributions to candidates for federal office. The Corrupt Practices Acts (1910, 1911, and 1925), Hatch Act (1939), and Taft-Hartley Act (1947) all attempted to regulate the manner in which federal candidates finance their campaigns and, to some extent, limit the corrupting influence of campaign spending.

Congress did not enact serious, broad campaign finance regulation, however, until the 1970s, in the wake of the Watergate scandal. The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) and its amendments established disclosure requirements; the Presidential Public Funding Program provided partial public funding for presidential candidates who meet certain criteria; and the Federal Election Commission (FEC), an independent federal agency, was created to enforce the nation's election laws. Although these provisions altered the campaign landscape, by 2002, it became clear that they were insufficient to regulate ever-increasing campaign expenditures in the United States. Under the leadership of Senators John McCain (R–AZ) and Russell Feingold (D–WI), Congress enacted and President George W. Bush signed into law a new set of campaign finance regulations known as the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) (see Table 13.1).

BCRA regulates political advertising and funding. The act, as it was originally passed, limited the broadcast of issue advocacy ads within thirty days of a primary election and sixty days of a general election, and set hard limits on campaign contributions from a number of sources, including individuals, political parties, political action committees, and members of Congress. Opponents of BCRA, including Senator Mitch

TABLE 13.1 WHAT ARE THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION LIMITS UNDER BCRA?

	Contribution Limit
To candidate, per election	$2,600[a]
To national party committee, per year	$32,400[a]
To state/local party committee, per year	$10,000 (combined limit)
To other political committee, per year	$5,000
Total contributions, per 2-year cycle	No limit per *McCutcheon* v. *FEC* (2014)

[a] These limits are for 2013–2014. BCRA limits are adjusted in odd-numbered years to account for inflation.

SOURCE: Federal Election Commission, www.fec.gov.

McConnell (R–KY) and the National Rifle Association, wasted little time in challenging its limits as an infringement on their right to free speech. In a 2003 decision, the Supreme Court maintained that the government's interest in preventing corruption overrides the free speech rights and upheld restrictions on individual expenditures.[4]

The Supreme Court has, however, declared other sections of BCRA unconstitutional. In 2007, for example, the Court held that the thirty- and sixty-day limits placed on issue advocacy ads were unconstitutional, thus opening the door to these electioneering communications throughout the election cycle.[5] And, in 2008, the Court overturned another provision of the act that had attempted to limit the amount of a candidate's own money that could be spent on running for office.[6] More recently, in 2010, the Court handed down a decision in *Citizens United* v. *FEC* that declared unconstitutional BCRA's ban on electioneering communications made by corporations and unions.[7] This decision struck a significant blow to BCRA's provisions and has had a dramatic effect on the power of interest groups and corporations in campaigns and elections. As a result of these rulings, campaign spending surpassed all recent records, spending approximately $6 billion on the 2012 election. In *McCutcheon* v. *FEC* (2014), the Supreme Court struck down the aggregate limits on the amount of money individuals may contribute to all federal candidates, parties, and political action committees combined. Although the ruling maintained the federal campaign limits that restrict how much a donor can give to any one candidate or to any one party committee, it paved the way for increased influence of individual donors in campaigns and elections.

The cumulative result of these decisions, and the Supreme Court's willingness to equate money with speech, has been to effectively gut campaign finance law in the United States erected to prevent corruption and limit the influence of special interests on American politics. To date, efforts to advance further campaign finance reforms have met with little success in Congress.

Sources of Campaign Funding

As mentioned previously, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act regulates campaign contributions from a number of sources, including individuals, political parties, members of Congress, personal savings, and political action committees. The Federal Election Commission regulates, records, and discloses these expenditures. The FEC also monitors infractions of campaign finance rules and acts as a quasi-judicial arbiter of conflicts.

BCRA and more recent judicial interpretations of the law have also opened the door to a number of other actors in political campaigns. Immediately following enactment of the law, 527 political committees became active in the campaign process. Following the Supreme Court's 2007 actions to lift the limits on issue advocacy ads, 501(c) groups increased their role in electoral politics. Since the *Citizens United* decision, Super PACs have become important players in elections.

INDIVIDUALS Individual contributions are donations from independent citizens. The maximum allowable contribution under federal law for congressional and presidential elections was $2,600 per election to each candidate in 2013–2014, with primary and general elections considered separately. These limits rise at the rate of inflation each election cycle. As previously noted, following the 2014 Supreme Court decision in *McCutcheon* v. *FEC*, individuals are no longer limited in the total amount they can donate to all candidates, political action committees, and parties combined per two-year election cycle. However, individuals still may not write unlimited checks to their favorite candidate. Most candidates receive a majority of all funds directly from individuals, and most individual gifts are well below the maximum level. In one recent election, researchers found that individual donors accounted for 60 percent of contributions to candidates for the House of Representatives, 75 percent of contributions to candidates for the Senate, and 85 percent of contributions to presidential candidates.[8] In 2012, the vast majority of Barack Obama's $700 million fund-raising effort came from individuals. Of those donations, some 32 percent came from small money donors.[9]

POLITICAL PARTIES Candidates receive substantial donations from the national and state committees of the Democratic and Republican Parties. Under the current rules, national parties can give up to $5,000 per election to a House candidate and $45,400 to a Senate candidate. In 2012, the Republican and Democratic Parties raised nearly $2 billion. In competitive races, the parties may provide almost 20 percent of their candidates' total campaign funds.

PERSONAL SAVINGS The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Buckley* v. *Valeo* (1976) that no limit could be placed on the amount of money candidates can spend from their own families' resources, since such spending is considered a First Amendment right of free speech.[10] For wealthy politicians, this allowance may mean personal spending in the millions. For example, in 2012, former WWE chief executive officer Linda McMahon spent $40 million of her own money to run unsuccessfully for the Senate in Connecticut. Other self-financed candidates also ran for the House and Senate. Interestingly, in 2012, most of these self-financed candidates did not win their bids for office. While self-financed candidates often garner a great deal of attention, most candidates commit much less than $100,000 in family resources to their election bids.

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACs) **Political action committees (PACs)** are officially recognized fund-raising organizations allowed by federal law to make contributions directly to candidates' campaigns. A wide variety of groups, including labor unions, corporations, trade unions, ideological issue groups, and even members of Congress seeking to build their party's membership in Congress, may create them. Under current rules, a multicandidate PAC can give no more than $5,000 per candidate per election, and $15,000 each year to each of the national party committees.

Although a good number of PACs of all persuasions existed prior to the 1970s, it was during the 1970s—the decade of campaign finance reform—that the modern PAC era began. PACs grew in number from 113 in 1972 to a peak of 4,268 in 1988. Today, approximately 4,000 PACs are registered with the FEC. These political committees have historically played a major role, particularly in congressional elections. However, in the 2012 election, the role of PACs significantly declined at the expense of other forms of outside spending. PACs spent only $32 million on the 2012 elections. Approximately 61 percent of those funds went to Republican candidates, while 39 percent of these funds went to Democratic candidates (see Figure 13.2).[11]

PACs remain one of the most controversial parts of the campaign financing process. Some observers claim that PACs are the embodiment of corrupt special interests that use campaign donations to buy the votes of legislators. Studies, in fact, have confirmed this suspicion. PACs effectively use contributions to punish legislators and

political action committees (PACs)
Officially recognized fund-raising organizations that represent interest groups and are allowed by federal law to make contributions directly to candidates' campaigns.

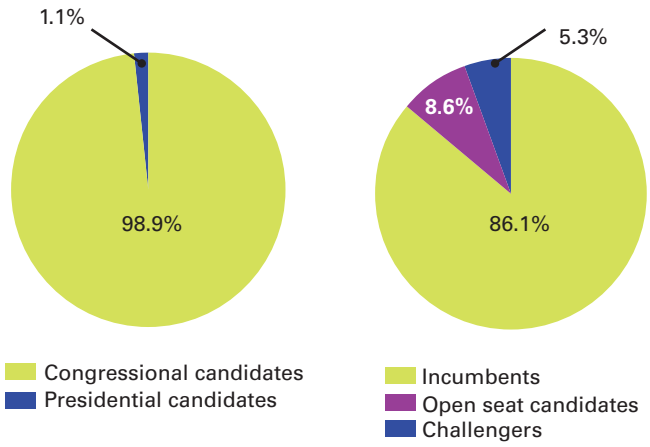


FIGURE 13.2 HOW DO PACS ALLOCATE THEIR CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS?

Political action committees are major players in American elections. Most PAC money goes to incumbent candidates running for the House of Representatives or the Senate.

SOURCE: Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org/lobby, 2008.

527 political committee
Organizations created with the primary purpose of influencing electoral outcomes; the term is typically applied only to freestanding interest groups that do not explicitly advocate for the election of a candidate.

501(c) group
Interest groups whose primary purpose is not electoral politics.

Super PACs
Political action committees established to make independent expenditures.

independent expenditures
Spending for campaign activity that is not coordinated with a candidate's campaign.

public funds
Donations from general tax revenues to the campaigns of qualifying presidential candidates.

matching funds
Donations to presidential campaigns whereby every dollar raised from individuals in amounts less than $251 is matched by the federal treasury.

affect policy, at least in the short run.[12] Legislators who vote contrary to the wishes of a PAC see their donations withheld, but those who are successful in legislating as the PAC wishes gain the reward of even greater donations.[13]

527 POLITICAL COMMITTEES Named for the section of the tax code under which they are established, **527 political committees** are organizations created with the primary purpose of influencing electoral outcomes. Although 527s technically include candidate campaign committees and party committees, the term is typically applied only to freestanding interest groups that do not explicitly advocate for the election of a candidate. Many unions and partisan organizations such as the College Republican National Committee have formed 527s.

527s are subject to very limited government regulation. The Federal Election Commission monitors the contributions given to these groups. However, no limits are set on how much an individual or other organization may contribute or on how much a group may spend on electoral activities. Thus, 527 groups spent approximately $343 million during the 2012 election and nearly $171 million during the 2014 midterm election. These expenditures narrowly favored Democratic candidates. Notable 527s participating in both elections included ActBlue and EMILY's List on the Democratic side of the aisle and Citizens United on the Republican side.[14]

501(c) GROUPS **501(c) groups** are interest groups whose primary purpose is not electoral politics. Federal rules, in fact, mandate that no more than half of a 501(c) group's budget be spent on campaign politics. Like 527s, they take their name from the section of the tax code under which they are established. These groups first became significantly involved in electoral politics after the Supreme Court lifted BCRA's ban on issue advocacy. Thus, most of their electoral activity focuses on raising awareness of candidates' positions on issues of interest to the group.

These groups are not required to disclose the source of their donations. However, they spend significant sums of money on campaigns. In the 2012 election cycle, 501(c) groups spent roughly as much as did 527s. Unlike 527s, however, most of these contributions favored Republican candidates. Examples of notable 501(c) groups include American Values Action and the Alliance for America's Future, both of which lean toward Republican in their contributions, and many state chapters of Planned Parenthood, which tend to lean toward Democratic in their contributions.[15]

SUPER PACS The fastest-growing and arguably most significant external actor in elections, **Super PACs** are a special kind of political action committee established to make **independent expenditures**, or spending for campaign activity that is not coordinated with a candidate's campaign. Unlike traditional PACs, they may not give money directly to candidates or party committees. However, they may advocate on behalf of candidates.

Though Super PACs must disclose the sources of their contributions to the FEC, they may take money from any person or organization interested in influencing the political process. They also are not subject to contribution or expenditure limits. Super PACs spent more than $600 million on the 2012 presidential election, with a larger percentage going to Republican Mitt Romney than President Barack Obama. They also played an important role in the 2014 midterm election, spending close to $340 million, with a larger percentage going to liberal candidates than conservatives.

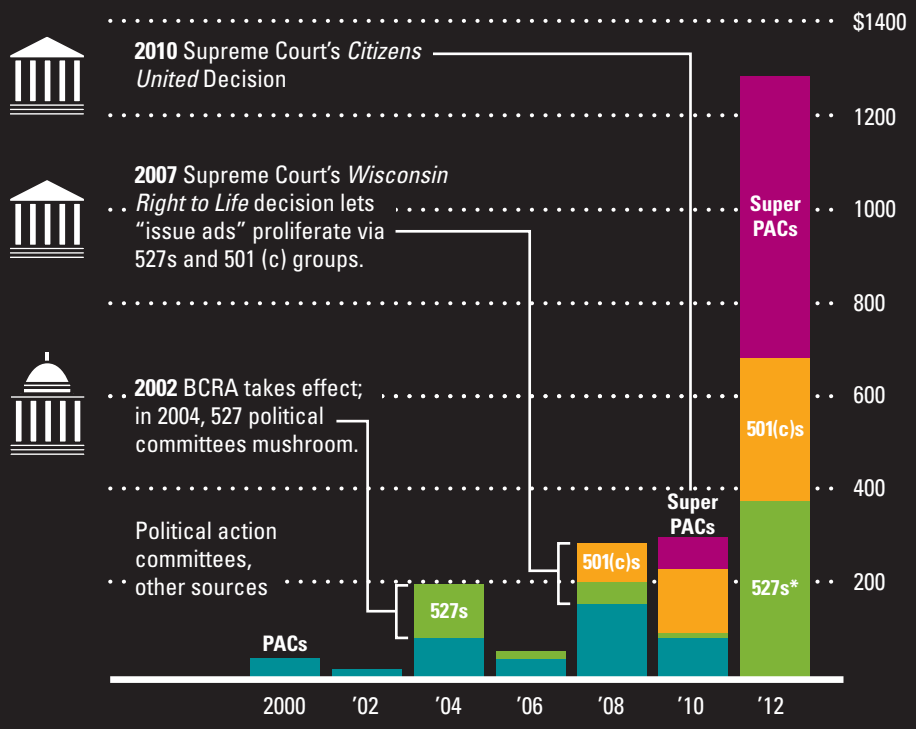
Public Funds

Public funds are donations from general tax revenues to the campaigns of qualifying candidates. On the federal level, only presidential candidates are eligible to receive public funds, although in recent years, few candidates have chosen to accept them. Some states also offer public funds to qualifying individuals running for particular offices, especially within the judiciary.

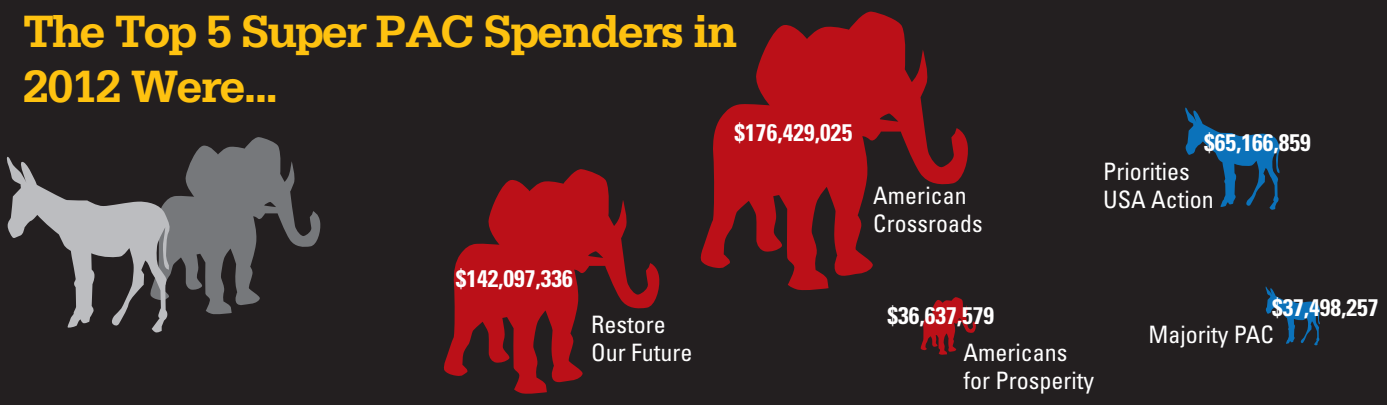
How Has Campaign Financing Changed Over Time?

Campaign financing has changed dramatically in the last ten years. Following the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) in 2002, some expenditures traditionally used in political campaigns were outlawed. But the BCRA, and subsequent interpretations of the act by the Supreme Court, opened the door for other forms of money to play greater roles in the political process. The rise of Super PACs has been one such change. These political action committees came under a great deal of fire during the 2012 election because of the unlimited sums of money they raised and spent from wealthy donors, potentially silencing the voices of average citizens.

What Unleashed Outside Spending?



The Top 5 Super PAC Spenders in 2012 Were...



SOURCE: Data from the Federal Election Commission, the Center for Responsive Politics, and Demos. * 2012 PAC and party spending data is included with 527 data.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How have the sources of outside funds changed over the last several elections? What events explain these changes?
2. Why do you think Republican groups spent larger sums of money than Democratic groups? How do Democrats raise and spend money for campaigns?
3. Is further campaign finance reform necessary? What impact do you think outside spending has on campaigns and elections?

A candidate for president can become eligible to receive public funds during the nomination campaign by raising at least $5,000 in individual contributions of $250 or less in each of twenty states. The candidate can then apply for federal **matching funds**, whereby every dollar raised from individuals in amounts less than $251 is matched by the federal treasury on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Of course, this assumes the Presidential Election Campaign Fund has enough money to do so. Taxpayers who designate $3 of their taxes for this purpose each year when they send in their federal tax returns provide the money for the fund. (Only about 20 percent of taxpayers check off the appropriate box, even though participation does not increase their tax burden.)

During the general election campaign, the two major-party presidential nominees can accept a $91.2 million lump-sum payment from the federal government after the candidate accepts his or her nomination. If the candidate accepts the money, it becomes the sole source for financing the campaign. A candidate may refuse the money and be free from the spending cap the government attaches to it. In 2008, Barack Obama was the first presidential candidate to opt out of the public financing system. In 2012, both major-party candidates chose not to accept the public funding in favor of raising unrestricted amounts of private donations. This trend will likely continue into the future.

A third-party candidate receives a smaller amount of public funds proportionate to his or her November vote total, if that candidate gains a minimum of 5 percent of the vote. Note that in such a case, the money goes to third-party campaigns only *after* the election is over; no money is given in advance of the general election. Only two third-party candidates have qualified for public campaign funding: John Anderson in 1980, after gaining 7 percent of the vote, and Texas billionaire Ross Perot in 1992, after gaining 19 percent of the vote.

Reaching Voters

13.4 Identify the ways campaigns use the media to reach potential voters.

The media play a large role in determining what voters actually see and hear about the candidate. Media can take a number of different forms; among these are traditional media, new media, and campaign advertisements.

Traditional media coverage of a political campaign includes content appearing in newspapers and magazines as well as on radio and TV. New media coverage includes content that appears on the Internet, in blogs, and on social media sites. Both traditional and new media can be very difficult for a campaign to control. Campaigns, however, have a great deal of control over the content they include in their campaign advertisements.

Traditional Media

During campaign season, the news media constantly report political news. What they report is largely based on news editors' decisions of what is newsworthy or "fit to print." The press often reports what candidates are doing, such as giving speeches, holding fundraisers, or meeting with party leaders. Reporters may also investigate rumors of a candidate's misdeeds or unflattering personal history, such as run-ins with the law, alleged use of drugs, or alleged sexual improprieties.

Although this free media attention may help candidates increase their name recognition, it may prove frustrating for campaigns, which do not control the content of the coverage. For example, studies have shown that reporters are obsessed with the horse-race aspect of politics—who is ahead, who is behind, and who is gaining—to the detriment of the candidates' issues and ideas. Public opinion polls, especially tracking polls, many of them taken by news outlets, dominate coverage on network TV in particular. This horse-race coverage can have an effect on how the public views the candidates. Using poll data, journalists often predict the margins by which they expect contenders to

win or lose. A projected margin of victory of 5 percentage points can be judged a setback if the candidate had been expected to win by 12 or 15 points. The tone of the media coverage, that a candidate is either gaining or losing support in polls, can also affect whether people decide to give money and other types of support to a candidate.[16]

STRATEGIES TO CONTROL MEDIA COVERAGE Candidates and their media consultants use various strategies in an effort to obtain favorable press coverage. First, campaign staff members often seek to isolate the candidate from the press, thus reducing the chances that reporters will bait a candidate into saying something that might damage his or her cause. Naturally, journalists are frustrated by such a tactic, and they demand open access to candidates.

Second, the campaign stages media events: activities designed to include brief, clever quotes called sound bites and staged with appealing backdrops so that they will be covered on the TV news and in the newspaper. In this fashion, the candidate's staff can successfully fill the news hole reserved for campaign coverage.

Third, campaign staff and consultants have cultivated a technique termed spin—they put forward the most favorable possible interpretation for their candidate (and the most negative for their opponent) on any circumstance occurring in the campaign. They also work the press to sell their point of view or at least to ensure it is included in the reporters' stories.

Fourth, candidates and their representatives have found ways to circumvent traditional reporters by appearing on talk shows such as *The View, Ellen,* and *The Five,* in which they have an opportunity to present their views and answer questions. They also make regular appearances on comedy shows, such as *Saturday Night Live, Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, The Daily Show,* and *The Colbert Report*.

CANDIDATE DEBATES The first face-to-face presidential debate in U.S. history did not occur until 1960, and debates did not become a regular part of presidential campaigns until the 1980s. However, they are now an established feature of presidential campaigns as well as races for governor, U.S. senator, and many other offices.

Candidates and their staffs recognize the importance of debates as a tool not only for consolidating their voter base but also for correcting misperceptions about the candidate's suitability for office. However, while candidates have complete control over what they say in debates, they cannot control what the news media will highlight and focus on after the debates. Therefore, even though candidates prepare themselves by rehearsing their responses, they cannot avoid the perils of spontaneity. Errors or slips

HOW HAVE THE RULES AND FORMAT FOR PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES CHANGED SINCE THE FIRST TELEVISED DEBATES?

Presidential debates have come a long way since an ill-at-ease Richard M. Nixon was visually bested by John F. Kennedy in the first set of televised debates. In 2012, President Barack Obama sparred with Governor Mitt Romney in a series of three debates, including one focusing on domestic policy, shown here.

of the tongue in a debate can affect election outcomes. President Gerald R. Ford's erroneous insistence during an October 1976 debate with Jimmy Carter that Poland was not under Soviet domination (when in fact it was) may have cost him a close election. George Bush's bored expression and repeated glances at his watch during his 1992 debate with Bill Clinton certainly did not help Bush's electoral hopes. In most cases, however, debates do not alter the results of an election, but rather increase knowledge about the candidates and their respective personalities and issue positions, especially among voters who had not previously paid attention to the campaign.

New Media

Contemporary campaigns have an impressive new array of weapons at their disposal: faster printing technologies, reliable databases, instantaneous Internet publishing and mass e-mail, social media sites, autodialed pre-recorded messages, and enhanced telecommunications and teleconferencing. As a result, candidates can gather and disseminate information more quickly and effectively than ever.

One outcome of these changes is the ability of candidates to employ "rapid-response" techniques: the formulation of prompt and informed responses to changing events on the campaign trail. In response to breaking news of a scandal or issue, for example, candidates can conduct background research, implement an opinion poll and tabulate the results, devise a containment strategy and appropriate spin, and deliver a reply. This capability contrasts strongly with techniques used in earlier campaigns, which took much longer to prepare and had little of the flexibility enjoyed by the contemporary e-campaign.[17]

The use of new media takes a number of forms. The most widely used tool is, of course, the Internet. The first use of the Internet in national campaigning came in 1992, when the Democratic presidential ticket of Bill Clinton and Al Gore maintained a Web site that stored electronic versions of their biographical summaries, speeches, press releases, and position papers. The Internet remained something of a virtual brochure until the 2000 elections, when candidates began using e-mail and their Web sites as vehicles for fund-raising, recruiting volunteers, and communicating with supporters. By 2006, most campaign Web sites featured downloadable and streaming video and were integrated into the candidate's overall communication and mobilization strategy. In 2012, all of the major candidates running for president and over 90 percent of Democratic and Republican congressional candidates maintained a campaign Web site.

The growth of online social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, has also helped candidates to disseminate their message to citizens. In August 2012, for example, President Barack Obama participated in Reddit.com's Ask Me Anything chat series. He received more than 10,000 questions from citizens and answered ten, including those focusing on the challenges of being president and the role of money in politics. Although these sites have been effective in reaching the politically engaged, early evidence suggests that they do not inspire new demographic groups to become engaged in electoral politics.[18]

Many candidates also use new media to target specific constituencies. One way campaigns may do this is through recorded phone messages, or robo-calling. These calls may both raise money and rally supporters for the candidate and spread negative (and sometimes false) information about an opponent. Robo-calls are remarkably efficient; campaign consultants can reach up to 2,500 telephones per minute at only pennies per call.

During the 2012 election, candidates also experimented with using smartphone technology to advertise to particular groups of people. Smartphones use GPS technology to determine users' locations and provide them with appropriate advertisements when they surf the Internet on their mobile browsers. Potential advertisers may buy ad space in targeted locations; candidates are no exception. Tech-savvy campaign consultants thus used this strategy to purchase mobile Internet advertisements centered on ballparks, fairs, voting locations, or other places where they might find particularly sympathetic or engaged constituencies.[19]

Take a Closer Look

A clear and classic example of negative campaign advertising aired during the 1964 presidential campaign. In an attempt to reinforce the view that his Republican challenger, Senator Barry Goldwater, held extreme views and would be reckless in office, President Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign produced a television ad called "Peace Little Girl" that was considered so shocking and unfair, it was pulled after only one broadcast. Considerable discussion of the ad in the media, however, ensured that its point was made repeatedly to the electorate. Review the stills of the ad below to consider its impact on politics.

The ad began with a serene scene depicting a young girl counting the petals she was picking off a daisy.

Once the girl said the number nine, a voice-over started counting down a missile launch that ended in images of a nuclear explosion and a mushroom cloud. The viewer then heard the president's voice saying, "These are the stakes."

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What was this ad trying to imply?

2. Why do you think this ad was considered so shocking and unfair?

3. What types of ads would generate similar controversy today? Explain your answer.

13.1 13.2 13.3 13.4 13.5

positive ad
Advertising on behalf of a candidate that stresses the candidate's qualifications, family, and issue positions, with no direct reference to the opponent.

negative ad
Advertising on behalf of a candidate that attacks the opponent's character or platform.

contrast ad
Ad that compares the records and proposals of the candidates, with a bias toward the candidate sponsoring the ad.

inoculation ad
Advertising that attempts to counteract an anticipated attack from the opposition before the attack is launched.

Campaign Advertisements

Candidates and their media consultants may choose to buy airtime in the form of campaign advertisements. These ads may take a number of different forms. **Positive ads** stress the candidate's qualifications, family, and issue positions with no direct reference to the opponent. The incumbent candidate usually favors positive ads. **Negative ads** attack the opponent's character or platform. And, with the exception of the candidate's brief, legally required statement that he or she approved the ad, a negative ad may not even mention the candidate who is paying for the airing. **Contrast ads** compare the records and proposals of the candidates, with a bias toward the candidate sponsoring the ad.

Although the number of negative advertisements has increased dramatically during the past two decades, negative advertisements have been a part of American campaigns almost since the nation's founding. In 1796, Federalists portrayed losing presidential candidate Thomas Jefferson as an atheist and a coward. In Jefferson's second bid for the presidency in 1800, Federalists again attacked him, this time spreading a rumor that he was dead. The effects of negative advertising are well documented. Rather than voting *for* a candidate, voters frequently vote *against* a candidate by voting for the opponent, and negative ads can provide the critical justification for such a decision.

Before the 1980s, well-known incumbents usually ignored negative attacks from their challengers, believing that the proper stance was to rise above the fray. But, after some well-publicized defeats of incumbents in the early 1980s in which negative TV advertising played a prominent role,[20] incumbents began attacking their challengers in earnest. The new rule of politics became "An attack unanswered is an attack agreed to." In a further attempt to stave off criticisms from challengers, incumbents began anticipating the substance of their opponents' attacks and airing **inoculation ads** early in the campaign to protect themselves in advance from the other side's spots. Inoculation advertising attempts to counteract an anticipated attack from the opposition before such an attack is launched. For example, a senator who fears a broadside about her voting record on veterans' issues might air advertisements that feature veterans or their families in praise of her support.

Although paid advertising remains the most controllable aspect of a campaign's strategy, the news media are increasingly having an impact on it. Major newspapers throughout the country have taken to analyzing the accuracy of TV advertisements aired during campaigns—a welcome and useful addition to journalists' scrutiny of politicians.

Toward Reform: The 2012 Presidential Campaign

13.5 Analyze the 2012 presidential campaign.

In the American political system, any election that includes an incumbent president inevitably becomes a referendum on the previous four years. If the American electorate is satisfied with his policies, the road to reelection can be relatively assured. However, if voters are uncertain or dissatisfied with a president's first term in office, they may select a new occupant for the White House–regardless of whether or not the incumbent was directly responsible for their dissatisfaction. That was the primary question that confronted voters in the 2012 presidential race between the Democratic incumbent President Barack Obama and the Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, a former governor of the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Nomination Campaign

Unlike 2008, Barack Obama did not face any opposition for the Democratic nomination. It was a different story for Republicans. Selection of the Republican nominee proved to be a long and contentious process featuring some of the same candidates who had sought the nomination four years earlier. The contest began in 2011 with a wide field of candidates, including Romney, who had been preparing to run again for president since his unsuccessful bid in 2008. Also seeking the nomination were former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, Representative Michele Bachmann (MN), Georgia entrepreneur Herman Cain, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (GA), former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, Texas Governor Rick Perry, former U.S. Senator Rick Santorum (PA), and Representative Ron Paul (TX). In total, 2,286 delegates were at stake and the winning candidate would need the support of 1,144 of them to become the Republican nominee.

THE DEMOCRATIC RACE With no opponent, President Barack Obama avoided the entire primary campaign trail and spent much of the spring and summer of 2012 raising money for his campaign as the Republicans battled one another for their party's nomination.

THE REPUBLICAN RACE Few observers expected the 2012 Republican contest to be as long and dramatic as it was. Through twenty debates over the course of a year, each candidate sought to portray himself or herself as the conservative best able to win an election in an economic climate that historically would have favored the ouster of an incumbent president (see Figure 13.3).

Many observers assumed that Mitt Romney would be an early favorite among Republicans. However, as in 2008, there was no widespread movement toward Romney among social conservatives, with many expressing concerns over his record as a moderate former governor of Massachusetts. They and others also expressed concern with Romney's Mormon faith.

Prior to the start of the Republican primaries and caucuses, several contenders showed early promise in polls. When the official contests began in the late winter and early spring of 2012, the first three states with primaries and caucuses delivered three different winners. Rick Santorum narrowly defeated Romney in the Iowa caucuses. Mitt Romney carried New Hampshire, a neighboring state to his home in Massachusetts, and Newt Gingrich carried South Carolina less than two weeks later.

Following his victory in Iowa, Santorum went on to win three more states before Super Tuesday, March 6, 2012, on which ten states voted. Of the Super Tuesday contests, Romney carried six states to Santorum's three, and Newt Gingrich won his home state of Georgia. As twelve other states and territories held primaries and caucuses later in March, Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum emerged as the only remaining viable candidates. After Santorum won in Kansas, he also took three southern states—Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Yet, despite Santorum's handful of victories, Mitt Romney carried the majority of the March contests, and by early April it became apparent that he had enough votes to win the Republican nomination for president. One week after Governor Romney won primaries in Wisconsin, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., he became the presumptive Republican nominee. Rick Santorum officially suspended his campaign on April 10th, and the other remaining candidates followed soon after.

The Interim Period

A gap of almost two months separated the end of the primary season and the opening of the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. Both campaigns were relatively quiet during the interim period, choosing instead to prepare for the general election. Several notable events that influenced the general election, however, did occur during the summer months.

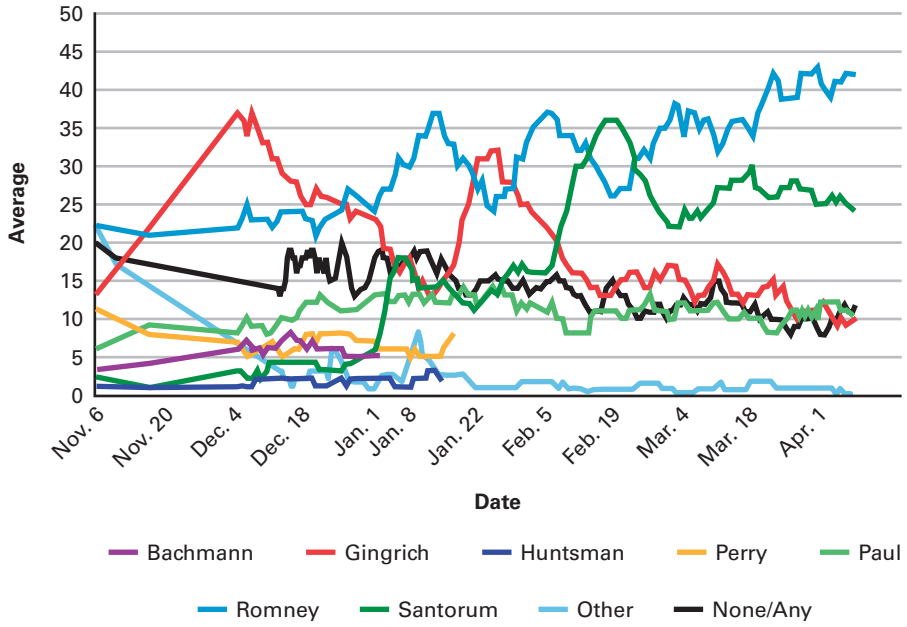


FIGURE 13.3 HOW DID THE FRONTRUNNER CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE 2012 REPUBLICAN PRIMARY?

Reflecting the diversity of the Republican field, many candidates appeared to be the "flavor of the week" during the nomination campaign. From November 2011 to April 2012, however, three candidates separated themselves from the field—Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum. This figure tracks the rise and fall of each candidate's popularity, as well as that of several other Republican candidates.

SOURCE: Data from http://www.gallup.com/poll/154337/2012-republican-presidential-nomination-race.aspx.

President Obama received encouraging news in June 2012 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a legal challenge to the signature legislative accomplishment of his first term, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which Republicans had labeled "Obamacare." The Obama campaign viewed the ruling as an important legal and political victory, even as the Romney campaign vowed to use the issue against the president in the general election. Another moment troubled Obama for the duration of the campaign came in mid-July when the President told a large crowd in Roanoke, Virginia, " if you've got a business, you didn't build that; somebody else made that happen." The remark was carried in national news and received heated criticism from conservative commentators. The comments would be featured in several national television ads against the president in the fall.

Governor Romney faced his own political challenges during that summer when he made several verbal gaffes during an overseas trip to Europe and the Middle East prior to the opening of the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. Romney, who had chaired the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah, angered many in London when he questioned whether the city was prepared for the start of the games. Later on that same trip, he also upset Palestinians by making remarks suggesting that Israelis are economically more successful than Palestinians because of cultural differences.

National polls at the start of August showed President Obama generally leading his Republican opponent. On Saturday, August 11, the Romney campaign, sensing the need to make headlines prior to the start of the Republican convention at the end of the month, announced the selection of 42-year-old Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin as Romney's running mate.

Romney's announcement generated great excitement among the Republican base. The six-term member of Congress and chair of the House Budget Committee hailed from what was expected to be a battleground state in the general election. Ryan had gained considerable respect among the Republican base after he and other House Republicans challenged Democrats and the Obama White House with several high-profile legislative proposals aimed at fiscal responsibility and reducing the nation's debt. Romney's selection of Ryan as his running mate was widely viewed as an attempt to

HOW DOES A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CHOOSE A RUNNING MATE?

Governor Mitt Romney chose Representative Paul Ryan, chair of the House Budget Committee, because he believed Ryan would help to shore up support with the conservative base. He also hoped that Ryan would help to deliver votes in his home state of Wisconsin, which many commentators viewed as a swing state.

shore up any remaining skepticism about his conservative credentials among the Republican base, and as a strategic effort to make Wisconsin a more competitive in the November election.

The Party Conventions

The Republican National Convention was held August 27-30 in Tampa, Florida. Due to the threat of Hurricane Isaac, which loomed just off Florida's West Coast, the order of the convention was changed and most official activity on the opening day of the convention was suspended, with the exception of the unveiling of a debt clock that displayed and updated in real time, the nation's rising national debt. Tuesday, August 28 marked the start of the convention featuring speeches by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and a primetime address by Ann Romney, wife of the presidential nominee. Her speech was designed as a personal address to the nation aimed specifically at appealing to women voters and presenting her husband as relatable and likeable person. On Wednesday, vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan accepted his nomination and delivered a rousing speech to the convention delegates that was highly critical of the Obama administration, but was widely challenged by the media for numerous factual errors.

One of the most bizarre moments of the 2012 Republican Convention came on the final day, when actor Clint Eastwood took to the stage in primetime with an empty chair meant to represent President Obama. The unscripted presentation of Eastwood speaking to the empty chair was received well within the convention hall, but met mixed

reviews among the viewing public and the media. The next day, in an unexpected move on Twitter, President Obama responded to Eastwood's skit by posting a picture of himself sitting in a chair marked "The President" with the message: "This seat's taken."

The Republican Convention concluded with Mitt Romney's acceptance speech, viewed by an estimated 30.3 million people. The speech mixed personal stories with his assessment of the state of the American economy, his plans to build economic growth, move the country toward greater energy independence, and a promise to the American people that if elected President, he would "help you and your family."

The 2012 Democratic National Convention followed less than a week later on September 4-6 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Controversy erupted on the opening day of the convention when it was reported that the 2012 Democratic Party Platform omitted multiple references to God, and that language affirming Jerusalem as the capital of Israel had been removed. The following day, amendments reinserting the stricken language were offered and adopted, but only after three attempts by the Convention Chair to gauge whether the voice-vote by the convention delegates met the necessary two-thirds support for passage under convention rules.

First Lady Michelle Obama delivered the convention's opening night primetime address. Like Ann Romney's speech at the Republican convention, the first lady's remarks were laced with passionate and personal stories of how she and President Obama met and raised a family. The speech was well-received by viewers and produced a standing ovation among the tightly packed delegates in the convention hall.

One of the most highly anticipated speeches came on the second night of the convention, when former President Bill Clinton officially nominated President Obama for reelection. Clinton electrified the convention delegates with a message that the Obama administration was on the right track toward economic recovery and prosperity. Clinton's speech received high praise from the media for making complex economic problems sound simple without talking down to the American people.

The following night, President Obama's acceptance of the nomination was originally scheduled to occur in a 72,000-seat football stadium, similar to a setting that had worked well for at the Democratic convention in Denver in 2008. However, rain and the threat of severe weather led party officials to move the finale back to the convention hall with additional seating to accommodate an audience of approximately 20,000. Many felt that Clinton's remarks the night before would be a tough act for the president to follow, and it was made all the more challenging by news of the venue change.

Vice President Joe Biden spoke first, touting his middle-class upbringing and challenging Republican assertions about the direction of the previous four years. Then, President Obama delivered a rousing acceptance speech viewed by 35.7 million people. In his comments, he offered a forceful argument that it was his administration that rescued the American economy from catastrophe and set the country on a path to recovery.

The General Election Campaign

After the party conventions, the general election campaign kicked off in full force. As the candidates entered the home stretch, the key issue driving both campaigns was the state of the American economy and which candidate would achieve sustained recovery. As the incumbent president, Obama continued to receive considerable blame for the slow, at times stagnant, growth of the American economy over the previous four years. Further complicating their choice, voters received mixed messages about the state of the economy: the stock market and other measures of recovery from the Great Recession showed modest improvement, yet unemployment remained stubbornly high at around 8 percent for most of 2012.

On the eleventh anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, national security and international affairs came into focus. Terrorists again attacked representatives of the United States overseas, killing Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three others at the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya. Criticism after the incident led the Obama administration to apologize for

certain aspects of the administration's handling of the crisis. Governor Romney was also criticized by some for appearing to try to use the crisis to advance his candidacy.

A week later, Romney faced his own scandal when a surreptitious video from a private Republican fundraiser in May was released publicly. In it, Governor Romney was seen suggesting to supporters that "47 percent" of the American people are dependent on government assistance, labeling them as "victims" who "will vote for the president no matter what." As news of the leaked video broke, Governor Romney initially refused to apologize for the remarks, but later stated on national news that his remarks in the video were wrong. The video resurfaced in numerous anti-Romney campaign ads.

Both candidates, as well as their vice presidential running mates, spent the final months of the election traveling across the country, attempting to speak to voters and influence their vote on Election Day. One of the best opportunities for both candidates to speak to the voters about the issues was the series of presidential debates sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates.

CANDIDATE DEBATES The first presidential debate occurred on Wednesday, October 3, at the University of Denver and focused on domestic policy, especially job creation and the American economy. The week before the debate, most national polls showed Obama holding a small lead over Romney. Both campaigns attempted to downplay expectations of their respective candidate's likely performance during the debates while also suggesting that the other side would perform much better.

The format of the first debate featured questions posed by moderator Jim Lehrer of PBS, with responses and rebuttals by the candidates. While neither candidate broke new ground on the issues, Romney repeatedly challenged Obama over the cost of the president's signature healthcare reform legislation, which at one point Romney referred to as "Obamacare." It was the first time Romney or any other Republican had spoken the term—which Republicans used a derisive way—in front of the president. Romney turned to the President and apologized, saying he used the word "with all respect." The President responded simply with, "I like it."

But the first debate would be remembered for Obama's lackluster performance, which would haunt him in the days ahead and redefine the race moving forward. The president was widely criticized for seeming disinterested, distracted, unengaged, and even bored. Romney's performance, on the other hand, helped establish credibility for his candidacy and counter images that he did not understand or wasn't sympathetic to the problems facing the American people. The television audience for the first debate was estimated at more than 67 million viewers and nearly every opinion poll in the following days found that viewers believed Romney was the clear winner.

As a result, President Obama's poll numbers fell after the debate, leaving him tied or even trailing Romney in most national surveys. On the day of the first debate, an average of national presidential tracking polls showed Obama was the choice of 49.1 percent of likely voters, while Romney was the choice of 46 percent. By Monday of the following week the Obama-Biden ticket's national average had dropped to 47.9 while Romney-Ryan rose to 47.4. Almost overnight, the race for the White House had become a real contest.

The only vice presidential debate was held on Thursday, October 11 at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. Fifty-one million viewers watched the faceoff between Vice President Biden and Representative Ryan, far short of the 73 million who had tuned in during 2008 when Biden took on former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin.

The second presidential debate was held on Tuesday, October 16 at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. The town hall format focused primarily on domestic affairs, but unlike the first debate, this second conversation included some discussion of foreign policy. Moderator Candy Crowley of CNN asked questions prepared by eighty-two undecided voters from the New York area selected to attend the debate. The stakes were high for both candidates, but especially for Obama, who needed to reclaim lost ground.

With a TV viewing audience of nearly 66 million people, this time the president was significantly more aggressive toward Governor Romney. Among the most notable

The Living Constitution

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States. —ARTICLE II, SECTION 1, CLAUSE 4

This provision of Article II is referred to as the presidential eligibility clause. It requires that the president be a natural-born citizen, at least thirty-five years old, and a resident of the United States for at least fourteen years. The Framers believed that each of these requirements was necessary to have a reasoned, respected chief executive who was loyal to the United States and familiar with its internal politics. In the 1700s, for example, it was not uncommon for a diplomat to spend years outside the country; without air travel and instantaneous communication, it was easy to become detached from politics at home.

In recent years, however, much of the controversy swirling around this section of the Constitution has centered on the natural-born citizen clause. Successful politicians from both sides of the aisle have been born outside the United States and are thus ineligible to serve as president, even if they have become naturalized citizens.

The natural-born citizen clause was also the subject of much controversy during and following the 2008 presidential election. Some observers questioned the circumstances surrounding the birth of President Barack Obama and wondered if this made him ineligible to serve as president of the United States. Obama was born in Hawaii to an American mother and a Kenyan father. Some critics claimed that his father's British lineage (Kenya was a colony of Great Britain at the time of Obama's birth) governed his citizenship and therefore that he should be ineligible to serve as president. Other critics argued that Obama's birth certificate was inauthentic, even though his official birth certificate filed with the Hawaii Department of Health had been validated.

Even after Obama had spent two years as president, in mid-2010, 27 percent of Americans and 41 percent of Republicans said they did not believe the president was "born in the United States."[a] To attempt to silence the cries of these so-called "birthers," in April 2011, President Obama released to the media a certified copy of his certificate of live birth. However, some Americans still rejected the validity of this birth certificate; the state of Arizona, for example, required that the birth certificate be validated again before the president's name could appear on that state's ballot during the 2012 presidential election.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Are the Framers' concerns about birth and residency as relevant today as they were 200 years ago? Why or why not?
2. What documents, if any, should a potential presidential candidate have to present to prove age and citizenship?

[a]CNN Poll, August 4, 2010, http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/04/cnn-poll-quarter-doubt-president-was-born-in-u-s/.

quotes by the candidates during the second debate was an oddly phrased statement by Romney that as governor of Massachusetts he has requested and received "binders full of women" qualified to serve in his administration. The phrase was perceived by some as insensitive to women and became widely parodied on the Internet. The general consensus following the second debate was that President Obama's performance was substantially better than in the first debate; most polls agreed.

The final presidential debate was held at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida on Monday, October 22. Of the three debates, it was the least watched, with a television viewing audience estimated at 59.2 million. The candidates sat together at a table and veteran CBS correspondent Bob Schieffer moderated the debate. It was planned that the last debate would focus exclusively on foreign policy—and while the candidates did spend much of the time discussing foreign policy issues such as the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war, and Iran's nuclear program—both candidates also used the setting to raise various points about their domestic economic plans on job creation, education, and the national deficit.

As in the second debate, the president was more aggressive, and polls following the debate again suggested that President Obama had outperformed Governor Romney. The Obama campaign, however, appeared to have made only marginal progress in recovering from his disastrous showing in the first debate. Neither candidate showed any significant signs of momentum heading into the final weeks of the campaign, though both sides proclaimed publicly that they were headed to victory. Polls reflected that the race was within the margin of error, with Romney recording a slight lead of 47.9 percent to Obama's 47 percent three days after their final joint appearance on national television.

THE FINAL DAYS Heading into the final push, key swing states such as Colorado, Virginia, New Hampshire, Ohio, Florida, and Wisconsin remained too evenly split for most national polls and news organizations to predict a clear advantage for either candidate, but a natural disaster lingering on the horizon would make a profound difference. Hurricane Sandy had been churning off the Eastern Seaboard of the United States for nearly a week. With landfall imminent, both campaigns were forced to cancel events in Virginia, North Carolina, and the Washington, D.C. area to avoid the appearance of campaigning while a storm lingered, and also to ensure that campaign events did not cause law enforcement and other first responders to be diverted from storm preparation efforts.

One week before Election Day, the megastorm slammed into Atlantic City, New Jersey and the Delmarva Peninsula on Monday, October 29. In terms of size, Hurricane Sandy was one of the largest to strike the United States in modern recorded history. At

HOW DO CANDIDATES REACH OUT TO VOTERS FOR SUPPORT?

Candidates hold large speeches, rallies and events in an attempt to energize potential supporters. Here, President Obama speaks to a gathering in Madison, Wisconsin, in the weeks before the election.

the time of impact, it stretched over 900 miles, an area twice the size of Texas, creating torrential downpours and severe flooding in New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Pennsylvania, Vermont, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, along with blizzard conditions and more than two feet of snow in parts of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The full economic impact of the storm would not be realized for months, but most estimates placed the damages well over $50 billion.

The aftermath of the storm created political odd couples just six days before the election, as President Obama toured flood-ravaged areas of the New Jersey coast with that state's Republican Governor Chris Christie, who had advocated against the president's reelection during the Republican convention and throughout the general election campaign. But in the aftermath of the storm, the Republican governor greeted the Democratic president with open arms, welcoming him to the Garden State to assess the damages, and praising the president's efforts to cut through government bureaucracy to deliver timely assistance to the people of New Jersey.

The national spotlight was on President Obama throughout the closing days of the campaign as he traveled from one area to another, examining the damage of the storm. Meanwhile, there was virtually nothing the Romney campaign could do to gain similar attention. Both campaigns suspended partisan campaign events for days after the storm struck, converting what would have been political rallies into "storm relief events" with Romney joining his supporters to collect and pack supplies for delivery to the American Red Cross. Eventually, but with just days remaining until Americans went to the polls, the focus of the national media returned to politics.

Election Results and Analysis

On election night, even as the first returns and exit polls were announced from states in Eastern and Central time zones, it was not immediately clear which candidate would win. Early in the evening, Romney received welcome news when networks projected him as the winner in Indiana, a state that Barack Obama had carried in 2008. Romney's Electoral College totals remained ahead of Obama's for more than two hours after most polling stations closed on the East Coast, but many of the early battleground states there remained too close to call based on early precinct reporting (see Figure 13.4).

The first sign of trouble for the Republicans came just after 9:00 PM Eastern when major news networks projected that Romney would lose in Michigan. Romney had campaigned hard against the Obama bailout of the automobile industry, and few expected him to carry Michigan, despite the fact that he had once lived in the state and his father had served as the state's 43rd governor. Still the results in Michigan were seen as a likely indicator of how Romney might be received in other auto-industry states such as Wisconsin and Ohio.

Fifteen minutes later, Pennsylvania, where Romney had made an eleventh-hour push for support, was projected for Obama. That was quickly followed by declarations that Wisconsin and New Hampshire would also go to the president. As the hours passed, the 2012 map began to look very similar to 2008, as Obama won victories in each of the key battleground states with two exceptions—Indiana and North Carolina—which were called for Romney just after 11:00 PM Eastern. But, the race effectively ended when Ohio was placed in the Democratic column; Obama was projected to have accumulated enough Electoral College votes to win reelection as president of the United States.

Governor Romney held off on conceding the election until after midnight. By then the major networks were projecting that Obama would also take the electoral votes in Colorado, Nevada, and Virginia. Only Florida remained uncalled, and it would be days before official results would be tabulated due to polling glitches and the prolonged process of counting of absentee and provisional ballots primarily in Miami-Dade County—the same county that had encountered problems during the 2000 presidential election. Unlike 2000, however, the final outcome did not hinge on results from the Sunshine State. The only question that remained unanswered on election night was Obama's margin of victory. Romney delivered a gracious concession speech

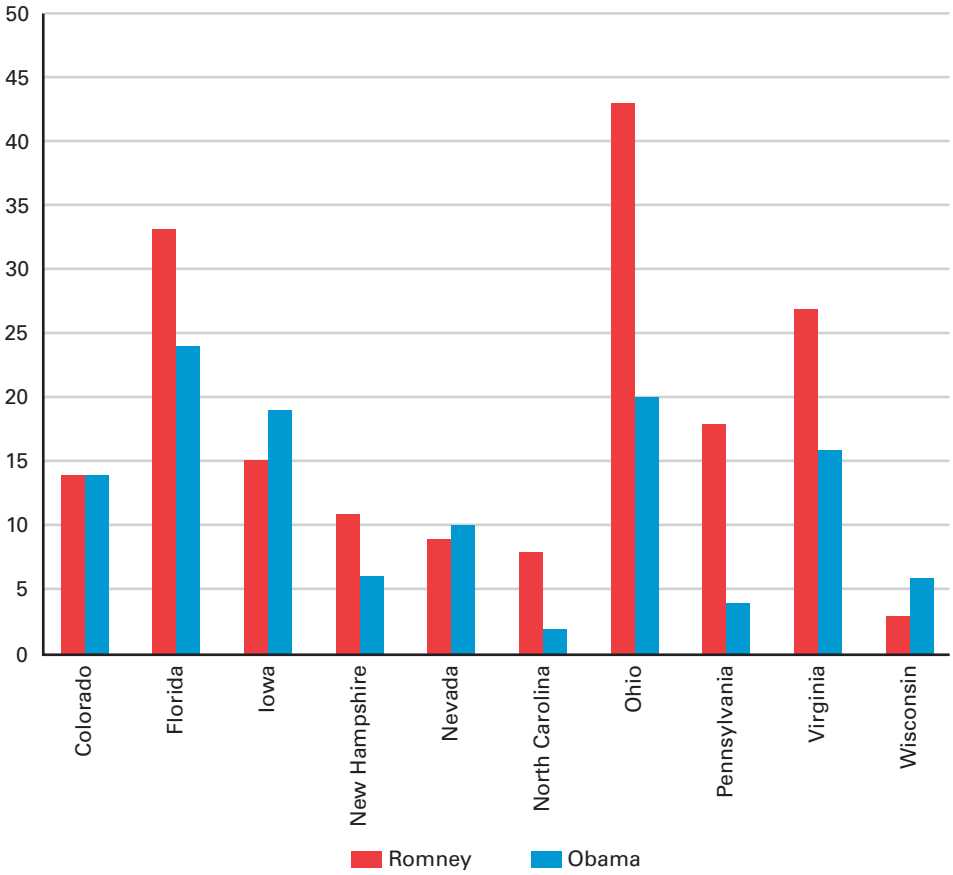


FIGURE 13.4 WHICH STATES WERE THE FOCUS OF THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN?

The majority of candidate visits were concentrated on a small number of swing states that were viewed as up for grabs in the 2012 presidential election. During the campaign, President Obama visited the above ten battleground states 131 times and Mitt Romney visited them 179 times. The remaining 40 states received Obama 81 times and Romney 106 times.

SOURCE: Data from http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/campaign-tracker/.

in front of supporters in Boston. President Obama, whose campaign slogan had been "Forward" followed with his victory speech in Chicago promising supporters, "the best is yet to come."

When polls in the remaining states closed and all the final tallies were in, Obama's victory in the Electoral College was 332 to Romney's 206. It stood as a substantial win—largely due to the support of women, minority, and young voters—though smaller than his landslide victory in 2008.

In the end, it was a slight, unexpected lift provided by Hurricane Sandy that pushed President Obama to victory in the 2012 election. President Obama won the key swing states of Ohio, Colorado, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, Florida, and Virginia, and kept Wisconsin in the Democratic column despite Romney's selection of Representative Paul Ryan as his running mate. Though President Obama received some 8 million fewer votes in 2012 than in 2008 and his Electoral College victory was smaller, the Romney campaign won back only two of the states that voted for Barack Obama in 2008.

The 2012 campaign was a roller-coaster ride for both the candidates and public, especially after Governor Romney dramatically outshone President Obama in the first debate in Denver on October 3. Yet for a challenger to defeat an incumbent, the challenger must deliver game-changing performances again and again, and no challenger has a bully pulpit like that of a sitting president. Ten days before the election, no one could have imagined that a late-season hurricane would play such a dramatic role in the presidential election, or that it would act as a circuit breaker for the Republicans'

momentum. Not only did the storm cause unprecedented damage along the East Coast and throughout much of New England, but it also pushed Romney off center stage in the last critical days of the campaign, enabling President Obama to dominate as presidential comforter-in-chief, assisted by his new bipartisan friend, Republican Governor Chris Christie.

Adding to the president's good fortune was a final jobs report the Friday before the election that proved helpful only because it wasn't disastrously bad. It showed the unemployment rate failed to jump back above the psychologically damaging level of 8 percent. Had the number been higher, Governor Romney could have used that number to build a crescendo for change. Instead, the final potential obstacle to Obama's reelection passed by as a one-day story. While Governor Romney surged after the first debate, he never quite closed the deal in enough of the key swing states and simply ran out of time.

Review the Chapter

Roots of Modern Political Campaigns

13.1 Trace the evolution of political campaigns in the United States, p. 366.

In modern campaigns, there is a predictable pathway toward office that involves nomination and general election campaign strategy. At the nomination phase, it is essential for candidates to secure the support of party identifiers, interest groups, and political activists. In the general election, the candidates must focus on the voters and defining their candidacy in terms acceptable to a majority of voters in the district or state.

Assembling a Campaign Staff

13.2 Assess the role of candidates and their staff in the campaign process, p. 369.

The candidate makes appearances, meets voters, raises funds, holds press conferences, gives speeches, and is ultimately responsible for conveying the campaign message and for the success of the campaign. The candidate relies on a campaign manager, professional staff, and political consultants to coordinate the strategy and message of his or her campaign. Volunteer support is also particularly important for mobilizing citizens and getting out the vote.

Raising Money

13.3 Evaluate the ways campaigns raise money, p. 373.

Since the 1970s, campaign financing has been governed by the terms of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). This act was amended in 2002 by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA). BCRA regulates political advertising and funding from a number of sources from which campaigns raise money. Recently, the Supreme Court has begun to chip away at some of the key tenets of the act. In 2010, the Court in *Citizens United* v. *FEC* declared unconstitutional BCRA's ban on electioneering communications made by corporations and unions, opening the way for an increase in the power of interest groups and corporations in campaigns and elections.

Reaching Voters

13.4 Identify the ways campaigns use the media to reach potential voters, p. 378.

Candidates and campaigns rely on three main strategies for reaching voters: traditional media coverage (newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio), new media coverage (Internet, blogs, and social media sites), and paid campaign advertisements. Traditional media coverage is the most difficult for candidates to control.

Toward Reform: The 2012 Presidential Campaign

13.5 Analyze the 2012 presidential campaign, p. 382.

Incumbent President Barack Obama was unchallenged for the 2012 Democratic nomination for president, while Mitt Romney emerged as the winner of a contentious Republican primary process. Nevertheless, polls indicated that the race for the presidency was consistently within the margin of error. But, the week before Election Day, a disastrous hurricane struck the Eastern Seaboard, putting the president on center stage. With the exception of Indiana and North Carolina, President Obama won reelection with exactly the same states he won in 2008 and largely with the same coalition he had assembled four years earlier.

Learn the Terms

Study and **Review** the **Flashcards**

501(c) group, p. 376
527 political committee, p. 376
campaign consultant, p. 372
campaign manager, p. 370
communications director, p. 372
contrast ad, p. 382
finance chair, p. 371
general election campaign, p. 367
get-out-the-vote (GOTV), p. 372
independent expenditures, p. 376
inoculation ad, p. 382
matching funds, p. 376
negative ad, p. 382
nomination campaign, p. 366
political action committee (PAC), p. 375
pollster, p. 372
positive ad, p. 382
press secretary, p. 372
public funds, p. 376
Super PACs, p. 376
voter canvass, p. 372

Test Yourself

Study and **Review** the **Practice Tests**

1. One of the primary dangers of the nomination campaign is that

a. candidates can become overly cautious and not talk about issues.
b. many candidates ignore their ideological base.
c. candidates may raise too much money.
d. candidates may attract too much media coverage.
e. candidates can become too ideologically extreme.

2. How do candidates generally position themselves ideologically during a general election campaign?

a. Moving to the extreme right or left of their party's identified voters
b. Gaining the support of niche groups to build a coalition
c. Taking positions held by third-party candidates
d. Becoming more ideologically moderate
e. Crossing over to take a wide range of issues held by members of the other party

3. The head of a political campaign is usually called the

a. campaign consultant.
b. political manager.
c. campaign manager.
d. political strategist.
e. political insider.

4. A campaign consultant responsible for assembling public opinion data is known as a

a. finance chair.
b. pollster.
c. direct mail consultant.
d. communications director.
e. campaign manager.

5. Most candidates receive a majority of their campaign contributions from

a. individuals.
b. PACs.
c. one of the political parties.
d. a combination of parties and PACs.
e. foreign corporations.

6. Which of the following are not limited by the FEC disclosure rules?

a. Individual expenditures
b. Political parties
c. Independent expenditures
d. PACs
e. Member-to-member donations

7. One of the strategies that campaigns use to control the media is

a. making the candidate more available to the press.
b. staging media events.
c. ignoring Internet attacks.
d. appearing on the major networks' nightly news shows.
e. holding unrehearsed, spontaneous press conferences.

8. Ads that compare candidates' positions to those of their opponents are known as

a. negative ads.
b. inoculation ads.
c. free ads.
d. contrast ads.
e. positive ads.

9. During the 2012 presidential elections:

a. The presumptive Republican nominee faced little opposition for the party's nomination.

b. Barack Obama held an early and sustained lead in the Republican primaries.

c. Mitt Romney faced no opposition for the Democratic Party's nomination in 2012.

d. Three different Republican candidates won the first three states in the primary contests.

e. President Barack Obama won all three presidential debates against Mitt Romney.

10. In 2012, Barack Obama:

a. Built a winning coalition of white men, evangelical Christians, and wealthy Americans.

b. Carried all of the swing states on Election Day.

c. Lost campaign momentum due to Hurricane Sandy.

d. Asked Vice President Joe Biden to step aside as his running mate.

e. Lost the support of only two states he had carried in 2008.