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The Media

"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

—Thomas Jefferson, letter to a friend, 1787

Essential Question: How do changes in the media as a linkage institution influence political institutions and behavior?

Soon after Johannes Gutenberg created the printing press, reporting and commenting on government became commonplace. In late colonial America, pamphleteers and newspaper editors printed ideas that helped bring about the American Revolution. The media have since evolved from those hard-copy publications intended for elite audiences to instant reporting and citizen interaction via the Internet. Governments have a love-hate relationship with the press, because journalists and commentators can affect public opinion, government operation, and policy. In fact, the media wield power that rivals that of the three branches of government. For that reason, the media are often referred to as the "Fourth Estate," or the fourth branch of government. They have the power to influence society and politics almost as effectively as government itself.

Media as a Linkage Institution

In 1734, New York writer and publisher John Peter Zenger faced an American colonial court on a charge of seditious libel. Zenger had criticized the royal governor in his weekly *New York Journal*, which constituted an illegal action at the time. Zenger's attorney argued that the truth, which was not a legitimate defense under the law at the time, should be an absolute defense. The jury agreed and found Zenger not guilty. This radical verdict, at odds with legal standards in England, marked the beginning of an American **free press**—an uninhibited institution that places an additional check on government to maintain honesty, ethics, and transparency—later enshrined in the First Amendment.

No matter what form it takes, the free press serves to link citizens to their government. Newspapers and television report on citizen concerns and what their government does. Web-based news organizations provide constant updates as news develops. Social media has become a chief way for citizens

and government to exchange information. All media ultimately help shape how people engage with government, including voting, and how the government acts.

Traditional News Media

Colonial newspapers served a major function during the American Revolution. Later, they fostered a spirit of unity for the new nation's course. Only large cities could maintain a regular newspaper, however, and most of them were only four pages and printed weekly. The first daily paper did not appear until 1784.

President Washington and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton wanted a newspaper to convey Federalist Party ideas. They hired a printer to create the *Gazette of the United States*, which became a tool of the Washington administration and the developing Federalist Party. Thomas Jefferson's followers responded by publishing the *National Gazette*. The warring political factions debated and sometimes attacked each other through these printed journals.

The partisan press ceased to dominate national media as newspapers expanded their circulation with mass-production and the creation of national news organizations. The 1860 opening of the **Government Printing Office (GPO)**—a permanent federal agency to print government publications—broke the patronage relationship between government and publishers. The GPO prints only government documents, not news stories or editorials.

In 1833, the *New York Sun* became the first successful daily newspaper to be priced moderately. The paper cost one penny per copy and was sold at outdoor city markets. It consisted primarily of human-interest stories and recipes, which were what the average reader desired. Government activity no longer dominated the front pages. Other similar papers also began to thrive as America's readership grew and newspaper owners sought a mass audience.

Associated Press Wire Service The telegraph altered communication even further. In 1841, Congress funded inventor Samuel Morse's telegraph line from Washington to Baltimore. This was the first direct government involvement in private-sector telecommunications. In 1848, New York's leading editors gathered in the *New York Sun* offices to finalize plans for a formal news organization, the **Associated Press (AP)**. By pooling resources, the editors could gather, share, and sell the news beyond their respective cities. By expanding the telegraph lines, reporters could send information quickly from anywhere in the world to AP headquarters in New York. Editors could then shape the story and send it out to client newspapers in cities across the country.

During its first year, the AP covered a presidential campaign, a women's rights convention, and other national stories. It established **news bureaus**, or offices beyond a newspaper's headquarters, in Albany, New York, and Washington, D.C. Because it wrote for a national audience in so many different newspapers, the AP standardized unbiased reporting in order to appeal to a

range of customers. The wire service set the standard for other news outlets to follow. Today, other wire services such as United Press International and Reuters compete with the AP, but they all follow the same standards of reporting.

Investigative Reporting In the early 20th century, Washington became a common dateline—the locale listed atop an article in a newspaper. Dispatches from the capital described such major news stories as the progress of the pure food and drug legislation, the efforts at trust busting, and the controversy over railroad rates. Progressive Era (1890–1920) journalism fostered integrity in reporting and a publication's ability to create real change. Magazines such as *McClure's*, *The Nation*, and *The New Republic* employed aggressive reporters to offer in-depth stories on national issues. **Investigative reporting** became a new genre, as reporters dug deep into stories to expose corruption in government and other institutions. Reporter Ida Tarbell wrote a damaging exposé of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil monopoly. Others such as Lincoln Steffens and Jacob Riis wrote stories and published photos that revealed the tragic conditions in cities. These journalists changed the national mindset to bring about reforms. For example, breaking up monopolies became easier once the public was aware of the harsh and sometimes illegal business practices of some industries. Newspapers were serving as a link between citizens and their government by reporting situations that called for new legislation.

Theodore Roosevelt shared the progressive spirit of these investigative journalists, though he did not always appreciate how they threatened his image or that of the United States. He dubbed the journalists muckrakers, a derogatory term that compared them to "the man with the muck rake" in the novel *Pilgrim's Progress*. They were too busy looking down and stirring up filth to gaze upon the stars. Lincoln Steffens proudly reflected on the label years later, "The makers of muck . . . bade me to report them."

Modern Print Media New media have emerged recently, profoundly influencing how citizens receive news. Yet, national newspapers such as the *Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, New York Times,* and *USA Today* remain influential, even if they've had to adapt to new modes of delivery. These newspapers continue to set the tone for national reporting, even if a majority of citizens no longer receive a hard copy on their front step every morning.

For decades, magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek,* and *U.S. News and World Report* dominated in-depth news coverage with middle-of-the-road perspectives. These publications still operate today, though now they compete with news magazines that originated online. Other magazines cover national and international politics with a particular editorial slant. Some of the more liberal publications—*The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *The Progressive*—have been around since the Progressive Era. Others, like *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard*, attract a conservative readership.

LEADING IDEOLOGICAL POLITICAL MAGAZINES	
Liberal	**Conservative**
The Nation	*National Review*
The New Republic	*Human Events*
The Progressive	*The Weekly Standard*
Mother Jones	*American Spectator*

New Communication Technologies

In the 20th century, radio and television both emerged as powerful new communication technologies. Citizens became fascinated with headlines and brief reports coming to them through the air. Broadcast stations developed news departments to shape an industry that competed with—and later surpassed—print media. Citizens began to rely on and become influenced by information relayed through sound and moving images.

Radio The first new form of technology was radio, which appeared shortly after World War I. The concept of a **broadcast network**—the broadcasting from one central location to several smaller stations called **affiliates**—was in full force by 1926, just seven years after the end of the First World War. Early newscasts included readings from *Time* magazine and news dramatizations featuring narrators and voice-over artists playing the parts of world leaders.

Radio journalism transitioned into more fact-based reporting as journalists moved from print to broadcast media. Edward R. Murrow was a key pioneer of this style. In 1940, Murrow broadcast from a rooftop in London in the midst of the Second World War, reporting on Germany's massive bombing efforts. The bombing had stopped temporarily, but radio listeners could still hear anti-aircraft weapons and air raid warnings. Films of the war appeared in movie theaters at the time, but, as Murrow biographer Bob Edwards put it, "Newsreel footage of the Blitz is in black and white; Ed's radio reports were in color." By the end of World War II, Murrow's voice was the most familiar in radio.

In the postwar period, broadcast companies shifted efforts toward television. By 1951, six years after the end of the Second World War, 10 million American homes had a television. Networks worked to develop news departments, and they covered the 1948 Democratic and Republican conventions. Television reporters wore headsets, carried 30-pound transmitters on their backs, and roamed the convention floor to interview delegates. Presidential contenders highlighted their credentials in front of the television cameras. Citizens were introduced to candidates for a live look at the individuals vying for each party's nomination. How a politician looked on television suddenly mattered.

Big Three Networks Over the next few years, the **Big Three networks** of ABC, CBS, and NBC set the tone for television journalism that is still largely followed today. Developing technology encouraged the networks to create in-depth programming that examined national affairs, international relations, and the lives of celebrities.

Edward R. Murrow moved from radio to television in 1951 to host *See It Now*, a precursor to *60 Minutes*. Murrow exposed Senator Joseph McCarthy by presenting examples of McCarthy's abusive tactics toward alleged American communists, which ultimately helped bring about McCarthy's downfall. Citizens trusted the voice—and now the image—of a trusted World War II reporter over an aggressive and corrupt politician. Television journalism had asserted itself as a watchdog, which made it an even more influential medium and strengthened its linkage function.

Television President In 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy became one of the first politicians to use the power of television to his advantage. The televised presidential debates between Kennedy and his opponent, Richard Nixon, began a new era of campaigning. Those who viewed the debates on television felt Kennedy won, while those who listened to the debates on the radio felt Nixon won.

Once elected president, Kennedy proved a master of the television medium, working with reporters and holding the first televised live press conferences. In 1963, CBS extended its 15-minute newscast to 30 minutes when Walter Cronkite interviewed President Kennedy. On November 22, 1963, Cronkite announced the president's death to the nation on live television. Coverage of Kennedy's assassination and funeral became the largest television event to date, and it remains embedded in the nation's collective memory.

Cable News In 1980, Atlanta TV station owner Ted Turner created the **Cable News Network (CNN)**. Americans had access to national news 24 hours a day for the first time. Cable companies added MSNBC and the Fox News Channel in the mid-1990s. These three cable news networks changed television news from a daily cycle with one evening peak to an all-day cycle with updates and analysis on the hour.

This change explains why President Bill Clinton's White House affair with Monica Lewinsky was so widely reported and why previous presidential affairs had not. Veteran White House reporter Helen Thomas noted how news reporting changed in the wake of the Lewinsky scandal: "Although gossip was also rampant about previous presidents, it remained just that—gossip—and reporters did not attempt to verify it."

Today, Fox, MSNBC, and CNN lead in viewership of cable TV news channels, though others like Bloomberg and BBC America have also become sources of 24-hour news delivery. Viewership of the top three channels peaked in 2008 at 4.3 million viewers per evening, and has declined somewhat as more channels are offered and as people turn to the Internet for news and entertainment. The Pew Research Center reported in 2016 that about 3.1 million combined viewers tune into those channels nightly. Though viewership has dropped, ad revenues for the cable's big three have steadily increased.

The original Big Three's (CBS, NBC, and ABC) 30-minute evening news broadcasts even today lead as America's key venue for political news consumption, hovering between 23 to 25 million combined viewers each night. These news sources have been around the longest, strive more for

objectivity, provide short but inclusive top stories, and are still free for those citizens who get their broadcasts through the air. It should also be noted that though local TV news has lost some of its audience over the past decade, it still has more viewers than the chief national networks or cable TV channels. More Americans turn on the local news for traffic and weather than the national news for politics.

The Internet The Internet was created and developed by the U.S. military as a tool to connect its vast network of computers. The technology became generally available to the public in the early 1990s. It is now an ever-present source of news, information, and entertainment.

In the early days of the Internet, journalists and news-savvy citizens scoffed at news traveling across the web. Because the Internet is mostly free and accessible, skeptics originally feared merging the news business with the new medium because they could not see how to make money. But major news magazines, dailies, and other traditional media outlets have now followed their audience to the Internet. While some people still receive a daily subscription of their favorite printed newspaper, the newsprint rolling off the presses for home delivery has shrunk drastically. Today, nearly all Americans (93 percent) rely on the Internet somewhat to get their news. People under 30 have made the web their preferred news source. Pew reports about 38 percent of people primarily get their news from a digital platform, versus about 20 percent from print.

Internet news sources can be divided into those outlets that were "born on the web," and "legacy" news sources. In the first category, websites such as *Huffington Post* and *Politico* are setting the standards for online political reporting. These and other digital media organizations, such as Yahoo News and BuzzFeed, have spent millions to bring well-known print and TV journalists into their ranks.

Meanwhile, traditional news outlets, the legacy sources, have developed strong and popular Internet platforms for reporting, such as nytimes.com and the *Wall Street Journal's* platform, wsj.com. These organizations have turned to digital platforms to compete and remain afloat financially. Promoting their mobile apps, hiring full-time online editors and graphic designers, and selling digital versions of their newspapers has helped ease the transition from print to digital somewhat, though the number of full-time journalists has dropped from almost 55,000 in 2007 to just under 24,000 in 2015.

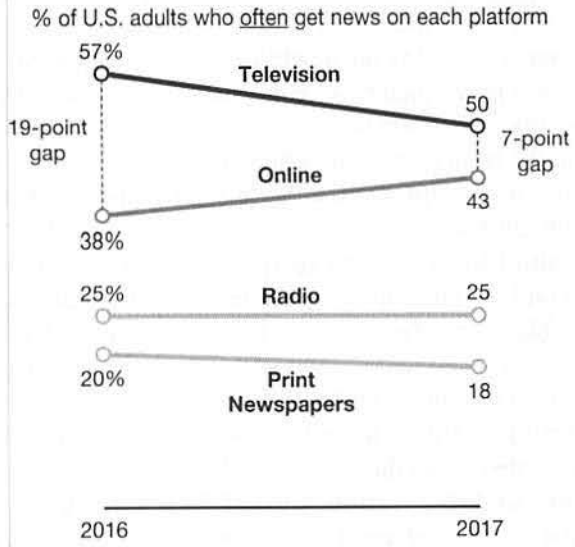
The shift from print to electronic journalism and the intense competition to "scoop" competitors in a fast-paced news environment has sped up publishing, shortened stories, enabled sloppy reporting, and caused journalists to seek out anything unique on an almost hourly basis to grab attention. This shift has not only encouraged sensationalism, but it also has increased the number of errors and after-story corrections.

Social Media Advances

In 2004, Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook, originally a campus social networking site that has since grown into a multibillion dollar corporation that engages as many as 400 million users daily worldwide. Competitors and other social media sites soon followed until social media became a primary vehicle for a vast number of Americans to consume their news. In 2018, about 86 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds used social media, and about 34 percent of senior citizens did. Of people who say they use Facebook, 76 percent use it every day.

Social Media and News This social media interaction between consumers and news outlets has encouraged the outlets to use social media to their advantage. Even the Big Three networks now have a strong social media presence. News outlets engage readers online, allowing direct conversations between journalists and consumers. Consumers also produce citizen-journalism by posting on-the-scene videos or other consumer-created content. Consumers also use social media to help organize newsworthy events, such as the nationwide Women's March in January 2017 and the student-organized March for Our Lives in March 2018. Social media therefore plays an increasingly large role in shaping news presentation and consumption.

Television and Online News Consumption, 2016–2017



Source: *Pew Research Center*

What do the numbers show? From what media platform do Americans often obtain news the most? What portion of citizens often obtain news via the Internet? What percentage often read a printed newspaper?

Media and Political Participation

Various types of media coverage—reports of our three branches, breaking news, election coverage, and commentary—influence political participation and policy as they inform the public to make educated decisions and sometimes sway parts of the public to their way of thinking or problem solving.

Political Reporting

Government and its leaders have always been topics of interest to the press and the public, and much of the coverage of a topic in the press takes the form of **political reporting**, standard "just-the-facts" kinds of stories.

Using media is an efficient and free way for government officials to make announcements, to test the popularity of ideas (sometimes called "trial balloons"), or to assist in operating the government. Politicians try to interact with the press in a way that paints themselves and the government institutions they run in a positive light. The press's ability to influence public opinion has always kept government officials on their toes, and the sometimes adversarial relationship between journalists and government officials creates a rift between the two. Though candidates and officeholders cannot do without the press, an unfavorable headline can sometimes make or break an official's reputation. Today, an unfortunate snapshot or video clip suddenly available on YouTube can ruin a politician's career.

This dynamic has created a love-hate relationship between the government and the press. Candidates and officeholders will frequently contact reporters to offer up a news story about themselves, their platforms, or their new programs, which in reality may be nothing but a public-relations campaign. Depending on the day's events and how much news is happening, a reporter may be grateful for the easy story that will result in a "puff piece" highlighting the positive side of a politician on the front page. The same reporter, weeks later, might have to explain allegations of corruption made toward the same politician.

Reporters sometimes have their own agenda or bias, and how they present information in **sound bites**—short excerpts edited from a longer remark that are especially vivid in presenting an issue—can have drastically different effects on the public depending on how they are worded. A politician or his communications chief may deem a reporter as hostile and not return calls if the reporter seems to be painting the politician in a bad light. This tenuous and sometimes confusing relationship between government and media influences how the Fourth Estate covers the three branches of government.

The **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA),** signed into law in 1966, allows the public to gain access to nonclassified federal documents. This law has helped journalists uncover information that was otherwise not released. However, there are many exemptions to this act. The president, for example, can request that certain documents remain sealed for a number of years and can redact content.

Congress and Press Coverage The House of Representatives voted during the first Congress to open its doors to the public and the press. In the late 1800s, many reporters preferred to cover Congress instead of the White House. In the 1950s, Americans became familiar with Congress during Senator McCarthy's televised committee hearings and in the 1970s during the Watergate hearings.

Congressional stories include members' roles on committees and in the legislative process—these are typically technical story lines, not easily conveyed in short headlines or brief TV news segments. Yet those interested in lawmaking continue to monitor the legislature closely. Two traditional print outlets that cover Congress, *Roll Call* and *The Hill*, have gained national popularity with their websites. Large newspapers and most TV news services have at least one Capitol Hill correspondent. On the Sunday talk shows—such as *Meet the Press* and *Face the Nation*—hosts will commonly have a lawmaker from each party at the table to debate the issues.

In the late 1970s, the cable industry created **C-SPAN**—the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network—a privately funded, nonprofit public service. Cable and satellite affiliates pay fees that in turn fund the network. C-SPAN began covering the House in 1979. The Senate decided to allow cameras into its chamber in 1986, which gave rise to C-SPAN 2. Congress owns and controls the cameras in the two chambers, but C-SPAN receives the feed and can broadcast House and Senate floor debates. When Congress is not holding debate in its respective chambers, the network covers committee hearings, seminars at university campuses and think tanks, public meetings, and political rallies.

Presidents and Press Coverage Significant media resources are assigned to cover the president. The press delves into the president's mind, relations with fellow policymakers, the first family, and interactions with other world leaders. Beyond the regular 100 or so top reporters who might cover the president in person daily, another 2,000 have White House press credentials. Some travel on *Air Force One* (the president's plane) or on the chartered press plane that follows it.

John F. Kennedy did the first live televised press conferences in the early 1960s. By President Richard Nixon's term (1969–1974), the dynamic between president and press had changed drastically. Nixon's paranoia, complicated by the release of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate scandal, pitted him directly against the press. He had offending reporters' phones tapped, his vice president spoke publicly about "disloyal" reporters, his Department of Justice tried to subpoena reporters' notes, and a White House aide threatened antitrust lawsuits against TV networks if they did not let more conservatives on the air.

In recent times, a full-time White House press secretary has served the president. The press secretary holds regular **press conferences** in the James Brady Press Briefing Room (named for President Reagan's press secretary, who was shot in an assassination attempt against President Reagan in 1981). The White House controls these media events. TV networks and wire services get preferential seating, as do the other major outlets, such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The more senior reporters are called on first, and the

press secretary typically signals the close of the session by calling on the senior wire service reporter.

Presidents appear at a podium to field questions much less frequently than their press secretaries do, usually only a few times each year. In their first year, Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump held 19, 27, and 21 overall press conferences respectively.

Donald Trump's candidacy and his first year in office led to tense relationships with the press. While on the campaign trail, Trump encouraged crowds at his rallies to rough up reporters. From his inauguration onward he and his team have misled and battled with the press. The pattern started with a combative first press conference when Press Secretary Sean Spicer offered exaggerations of the actual crowd size at Trump's swearing-in ceremony but otherwise did not take questions from the reporters present at the press conference.

Media coverage of President Trump's initial year reflected some of the adversarial relationships between the president and the press by tending to include more stories on personality, character, and leadership than on policy. The Pew Research Center found that two-thirds of the coverage during his first year concentrated on the president's political skills, immigration, his appointees, U.S.-Russia relations, and health care. Another finding was the more sources a reporter quoted, the more negative the story. And about one in six stories on the president included a direct tweet from Trump's Twitter account.

Courts and Press Coverage The press covers crime, lawsuits, courtroom activity, and appeals court decisions. The Sixth Amendment requires that trials be public and thus makes regular press coverage possible. At the national level, major newspapers and television news typically assign a legal affairs correspondent to cover the Supreme Court and high-profile trials throughout the country. Viewers often see footage of a trial from the state level, especially one involving celebrities or a horrific crime. In the federal courts, however, cameras are generally not allowed. Instead, pastel drawings depicting courtroom people and events usually appear on screen during TV news coverage.

Attempts to bring cameras into the Supreme Court for increased understanding and transparency will likely fail. For every person who sees court coverage on C-SPAN gavel-to-gavel, the late Justice Antonin Scalia once warned, "10,000 will see 15-second take outs on the network news, which, I guarantee you, will be uncharacteristic of what the court does."

Political Commentary

Journalism in the late 20th century made distinctions between fact and opinion. In print newspapers, the front pages offered more of an Edward R. Murrow-style of objectivity, while subjective views were kept on the editorial or Op-Ed pages, where the organization's editorial board would publish **editorials**—the organization's opinion pieces—including endorsements of political

candidates. Television newscasters and newsroom editors would occasionally go on the air and read their written **commentary** as the word "Commentary" appeared on the screen, meaning opinion and interpretation rather than "just-the-facts" reporting.

As more media outlets have appeared and as the political conversation has widened to include more extreme positions, at times the lines between objective and slanted presentations have blurred. Though the solid wall between newsrooms and editorial departments remains in the offices at some news outlets, in other places the wall between what is news and what is commentary is not strong or apparent.

Ideologically slanted websites and TV channels compete with and are often as powerful and present as those following traditional standards of journalism. Born-on-the-web ideological outlets and cable TV networks hire partisans, political strategists, and former Congress members and give them prominence on their web pages and in their studios. Many columns and blogs are not clearly labeled as "opinion," and thus the nondiscerning reader may not immediately realize the voice of an ideological extremist and may accept those views as if they were coming from the old-guard reporter dedicated to objectivity. CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360,* for example, often provides a panel of four commentators on each side of the political spectrum, competing not only to express their political goals but perhaps also for a more-permanent position with the network or a higher-paying offer from another channel. In other words, their statements are unlikely to be purely objective.

In a news environment of frequent commentary, observers have noticed two major trends. "One is a fixation on small concerns that have little or nothing to do with official actions of governments, such as whose statues should be displayed in public and what NFL players do during the national anthem," Josh Barro of *Business Insider* has pointed out, referring to controversies about the statues of confederate leaders in the South and the practice during the 2017 football season of some NFL players to kneel during the national anthem as a sign of protest. The other trend is how fixated these commentators are on concerns "so large and amorphous they cannot obviously be addressed by public policy."

Cable networks have employed more and more commentators, in part because of so many expanded outlets but mainly to draw audiences. The basic news can be presented in only so many unique ways, but commentators often have their own colorful personalities or backgrounds that serve to draw viewers looking for something different.

"Make politics boring again," says Noah Rothma, oddly enough in *Commentary* magazine. His bland solution might help Americans have a realistic understanding of governmental functions and would allow the press to neutralize politicians who incite controversies that exacerbate tensions. He admits, however, that his approach "would murder a lucrative industry that has turned societal divisiveness into a sport."

Political Analysis

A form of journalistic expression that explores and provides opinions on a topic in depth is called **political analysis**. This form offers explanations on topics, usually by experts, which help readers understand complex subjects. Political analysis is valuable as a way to educate news consumers on likely causes, effects, and implications of proposed legislation, court rulings, or budget proposals. Experts examine the topic from a variety of angles but do not include their own opinions on the subject.

For example, in 2014, there was discussion in the Senate about a constitutional amendment to limit campaign contributions that would have undone both *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) (page 508) and *Buckley v. Valeo* (page 505). No one expected the amendment to come into being, but it provided an opportunity to reexamine the extremely complex issues intertwined in those cases. Mark Schmitt, Director of Political Reform at New America, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank, wrote an analysis for the *Washington Post* that explored what would happen if such an amendment were to be ratified ("A constitutional amendment wouldn't really limit the power of money in politics," May 29, 2014). He used his decades of policy experience to write his analysis. Pieces such as these provide important information and explanations for engaged citizens who want to take seriously the consequences of government actions.

New America is a think tank that "does not engage in research or educational activities directed or influenced in any way by financial supporters," according to its website, so its political analysis is likely objective. Other think tanks, however, have strong ideological bases, liberal and conservative, and analysis from such a think tank would be likely to have a biased perspective.

Election Coverage: Media as Scorekeeper

As you read in Chapter 10, public opinion polling becomes a major news item during elections, a situation that casts media in the role of **scorekeeper**. As scorekeepers, the media track political successes and failures. During campaign seasons, reporters update readers and viewers nonstop on the ups and downs of competing candidates. The result is **horse-race journalism**, in which reporters find new ways to discuss who is leading and who is falling behind. As a result, they tend to over-emphasize public opinion polls, mainly because these are the only data that tend to change day to day. Candidates' ideas, policies, or biographies remain fairly static, so once those are reported, they are no longer considered newsworthy. The scorekeeping continues after an election by examining an elected official's approval rating or by crediting or blaming the successes and failures of government proposals and programs.

Scorekeeping, especially before an election, can be criticized for many reasons. When the media devotes time and emphasis to polling, it is not sharing candidates' proposals or examining the intricacies of a bill. When it delves into approval ratings, it is not properly evaluating government delivery of services.

When numbers and statistics dominate the conversation and the analysis, the media sacrifice time that could be used to publicize ideas that could affect real change. This constant—often circular—style of reporting also causes media outlets to turn political events into popularity contests, rather than contests in which voters make decisions based on candidate qualifications and platforms.

Bandwagon Effect Constant reporting on poll numbers may also cause a **bandwagon effect**, or a phenomenon in which people do something only because other people are doing it. (See page 375.) If Candidate A is ahead in the polls, undecided voters may begin to favor Candidate A because others do. Citizens may also jump on the bandwagon because they trust the wisdom of the masses or because they simply accept an inevitability and want to vote for a winner. Citizens may even start to genuinely admire the person who they believe will likely win.

What Gets Covered: Media as Gatekeeper

Much more is happening in the world than can fit into a 30-minute broadcast of the evening news or even fit onto a single online news magazine. Most news outlets have an **editorial board**, a group of veteran journalists who guide the editorial philosophy of the organization.

The editorial boards of news media therefore act as a **gatekeeper** by determining what is newsworthy and therefore deciding what information the public will receive. Print and radio editorial boards fulfill the same function by setting their own news agenda. What the media decide to publish directly influences the issues people regard as important. From what they learn through the media, citizens will contact their member of Congress, write letters to the editor, and assemble in support of a cause.

For example, a 2017 news story that implicated powerful filmmaker Harvey Weinstein as a serial womanizer and sexual assault offender sparked a movement for women to speak out against sexual aggression and rape. Before, such accusations may have resulted in powerful people in the film industry scoffing at them or ending the accuser's movie career. The coverage of Weinstein and many more sexual victims of powerful men followed. As the media accurately portrayed these women as victims, the news spread quickly and encouraged additional victims (recent and old) to make similar accusations. With what became the #MeToo Movement, the press had directly or indirectly facilitated an organized effort to stop sexual aggression in the workplace. This effort was highlighted at the end of 2017 when a special U.S. Senate election pitted Alabama Republican Roy Moore against Democrat Doug Jones. As the election approached, several women alleged that Moore had propositioned them or had a relationship with them back when he was a prosecutor in his 30s and they were teenagers. In a usually reliable Republican state, Jones defeated Moore for the Senate seat. Had the accusations against Moore been in isolation or barely covered, it is hard to imagine those accusations having the same political impact, and it might have been difficult for Jones to win.

Digging for the Truth: Media as Watchdog

Journalists' obligations to keep an eye on government or industry is part of the press's function as a **watchdog**. Investigative reporters look for corruption, scandal, or inefficiency. In fact, Congress may not even decide to address an issue until after the press has brought it into the light of day. In the age of Teddy Roosevelt's muckrakers, *McClure's* magazine published a series entitled "Railroads on Trial" that ultimately led Congress to strengthen train regulations. More recently, the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Journalism, the industry's top honor, was awarded to journalists who investigated the flood of opioids into West Virginia counties with the highest overdose rates in the nation; the responsibility of the state of Florida for violence and neglect toward mental patients in state hospitals; the influence of lobbyists on congressional leaders and state attorneys general to favor the rich; and a rigged system orchestrated by doctors and lawyers to deny benefits to coal miners with black lung disease. The investigative work on the coal miners led to changes in the law.

Investigative Reporting in Vietnam Several investigative journalism efforts have become iconic examples of the power of the press to bring about change. One involves reporting from Vietnam during the war (1955–1975). Unlike the patriotic press corps of both world wars and the Korean War, journalists stationed in Vietnam began to question information presented by the United States military and diplomats. Television images brought the war into citizens' living rooms, and journalists did not hold back on showing the tough realities of the war. Roughly 10 American journalists were assigned to Vietnam in 1960. By 1968, about 500 full-time correspondents representing print, television, and radio were in South Vietnam. "Government's interpretations of events did not coincide with what we learned on our own," said NBC Vietnam Bureau Chief Ron Steinman. "We listened, hoping to discover a kernel of truth in a fog of lies." The reporting from Vietnam helped inspire the mass protests against the war that eventually led to U.S. withdrawal. In early 1968, after a trip to Vietnam, CBS anchor Walter Cronkite—known as the "most trusted man in America"—closed the evening news with an opinionated report that had big consequences. "We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds." President Lyndon Johnson, commander in chief at the time, reportedly remarked that if he had lost Cronkite, he had also lost America.

The Watergate Scandal A few years after the conflict in Vietnam waned, President Nixon sought reelection. *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein served as watchdogs by uncovering the Watergate burglary scandal. In 1972, while reporting on a burglary of the

Democratic National Committee office in the Watergate Hotel, Woodward and Bernstein eventually discovered that the burglars stole information in order to help Nixon's reelection campaign. These investigative reporters kept the story alive throughout a congressional investigation and the eventual resignation of the president.

Torture at Abu Ghraib When the U.S. Army discovered its soldiers were mistreating Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, a prison in Iraq, journalist Seymour Hersh reported the horrific abuses in *The New Yorker* magazine in 2004. The TV show *60 Minutes* aired the story with photographic evidence. The terrible abuses, which occurred halfway around the world, would never have reached the American public if not for the Fourth Estate's check on government. A number of military personnel were charged and sentenced, and, in 2008, the military instituted reforms in its Iraqi prisons.

Media Ownership and Bias

The increasingly diverse options presented by so many media outlets have altered how citizens rely on the media. The around-the-clock demand for information has created a fast-paced, competitive market of outlets. They constantly vie for readers, viewers, and consumers, becoming increasingly partisan in their efforts to do so. As a result, demand for more media content also encourages the growth of media outlets with a specific political agenda and a targeted audience—a concept known as **narrowcasting.**

The rapid surge of new media outlets has therefore altered the political landscape. The lifting of the **Fairness Doctrine**—a former federal policy that required radio and television broadcasters to present alternative viewpoints—has allowed broadcasters more leeway and freedoms in what they air. A generations-long reputation of the news media having a liberal bias has allowed for conservative alternatives to succeed. For example, Sinclair Broadcast Group, reaching 40 percent of American households, is known for its conservative slant. Cable television has given birth to a variety of unique outlets that have altered news delivery to specialized audiences. The Internet has also created seemingly endless choices. All of these changes have redefined the roles and relationships between media and citizens.

For example, conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh emerged as a national conservative voice and gained a strong following in the early 1990s. One reason he succeeded was because he created a sense of community among people already inclined to agree with one another. By 2008, this pioneer of the new medium had as many as 20 million listeners. Over the same period, **talk radio**—those syndicated political shows that air at stations coast-to-coast—grew apace and became a common way for Republicans to get political news. Without the Fairness Doctrine, there was no need to provide other viewpoints to challenge the community's beliefs, which became self-reinforcing on both the right and left.

Media Ownership

In 1934, Congress passed the Federal Communications Act, which created the **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**. The FCC regulates electronic media, and it has authority over the content of radio, television, wire, and satellite broadcasts. It also regulates ownership by attempting to prevent monopolies. In 1941, for example, the FCC forbade NBC from operating two networks. NBC sold one of its two networks, which led to the establishment of ABC. In the last years of the 20th century, the popularity of cable news exploded, the Internet became a viable news source, and the entire landscape of media ownership changed.

The Influence of Fox Though Ted Turner and CNN invented cable news in general, the **Fox News Channel (FNC)** drastically altered it when it started in 1996. As media critic David Folkenflick claims in his book *Murdoch's World*, "No other news organization has done more in recent years to reshape that terrain than Fox." The time was ripe for an alternative news channel. The Republicans had gained control of Congress. A longstanding conservative disdain for the media had reached its zenith. And an era of polarization had begun. Media mogul Rupert Murdoch hired Nixon ad man and longtime Republican media strategist Roger Ailes to launch the endeavor.

Ailes assembled a team of capable journalists, many who leaned to the right or desired the breathing space an alternative news channel might offer. And Ailes knew there were enough viewers in middle America who thirsted for that alternative. On its maiden broadcast, Fox host Bill O'Reilly asked, "How did television news become so predictable and in some cases so boring?" After emphasizing too many news channels had become "politically correct," he offered, "Well, we're going to try to be different, stimulating and a bit daring, but at the same time, responsible and fair." It was code for "we're not going to be the typical liberal TV news." Sharper graphics, more dramatic show introductions, noticeable red-white-and-blue patriotism, and a nightly lineup dominated by conservative hosts, conservative guests, and attractive reporters became the hallmarks of the Fox model.

The news at Fox is presented in ways, Folkenflick shows, "that reflect and further stoke a sense of grievance among cultural conservatives against coastal elites." Since its early days, the motto "Fair and Balanced" has suggested that the other networks are not and Fox is here to correct that. Another catchphrase, "We Report, You Decide," suggested that the others—the liberal media elite—are indoctrinating viewers.

The risk paid off. After September 11, 2001, and the initial years of the George W. Bush presidency, Fox took the number one slot as the most-watched of the cable TV news channels and it has never lost it. In fact, after the 2016 election year, Fox became the most-watched cable TV channel of any kind.

A 2014 study showed that Fox had edged the Big Three networks as the "most trusted" news overall, though not likely due to Fox's journalistic standards. When lining up several TV news outlets, right-leaning citizens from

the sample consistently back Fox News, while moderates and liberals list as their top choice those from a variety of other not-conservative networks as the most trustworthy. Among self-described conservatives, Fox was trusted by 48 percent. Among self-described liberals, the Big Three led as most trusted, with CNN and PBS essentially tied for second.

Since America has such an ideologically diverse audience, producers, viewers, and TV journalists responded. As Fox News was born and developed, so too were other cable news networks. MSNBC was also established in 1996. Over time, it became the liberal alternative to Fox. However, the world of cable television is more fragmented than having a simple split between two networks. Channels as varied as ESPN and The History Channel have found ways to draw shares of viewers to them, seeking niche audiences to sell their product. CNBC is a 24-hour news channel that focuses on financial news. Large numbers of social conservatives tune into the Christian Broadcasting Network. Some networks, like Univision, have Hispanic audiences. Bloomberg News is yet another up-and-coming news channel that broadcasts much political news.

Impact of Ownership This market fragmentation has only encouraged network owners to find more potential viewers to turn to their channel. For those presenting political news while in search of profits—competing for viewers in order to attract advertisers—Fox, CNN, and MSNBC have each gone further away from objectivity and have revealed their bias. Studies show that 24-hour news channels actually show little substantive news, repeat sensational stories over and over all day often with nothing new to add, have reporters do more general talking about their story than traditional reporting on it, and the journalistic drive to answer the hard questions is spotty. The regular newscasters and anchors tend to ignite tempers, employ sarcasm, stoke fear, and conduct their presentations with a sense of moral righteousness. Sometimes their partisan guests deliver ad hominem attacks.

Politically savvy citizens in search of more than what the main networks offer turn to their choice of cable media, especially during election season. More Americans watch the evening Big Three in general, but during campaign season, more Americans say they turn to one or more cable channels for election coverage. In 2016, all news channels advanced in the ratings. Fox led all basic cable networks with an average of 2.5 million viewers during its prime-time lineup, up 36 percent from the previous year. CNN went up 77 percent to 1.3 million viewers and MSNBC increased at the same rate to 1.1 million.

As Pew Research Center confirms, "Those on the right and left have significantly different media diets." In a study done in late 2016, Pew found about 40 percent of Trump voters relied on Fox News as their "main source" for news. Clinton voters, on the other hand, listed CNN as their main source, but only 18 percent did so. MSNBC was second, and Fox didn't make it into their top ten.

Fox viewers include a high number of self-described conservatives, 60 percent. Meanwhile both CNN and MSNBC viewers claimed to be split with roughly one-third conservative, liberal, and moderate.

Media Bias

With the explosion of niche cable networks and online news sources, there is no longer any doubt as to whether bias in the media exists. Now, it is merely a question of where it exists and which way it leans. In fact, bias has become essential to the business model of several news outlets. Meanwhile, what is sometimes termed the **mainstream media**, or the collection of traditional news organizations, still operates an objective news model. Conservative critics have called the media liberal for nearly two generations, and researchers have found liberal tendencies in the media both in its membership and less obviously in its delivery. But to understand bias in the media, one has to ask, "Which media are you talking about?"

Traditional Bias Label The media have been accused of a liberal bias since the early 1970s, when the press hounded President Nixon. But that is a simplistic characterization that circumvents the real challenges of measuring bias. Today, with thousands of national reporters for every entity from Fox News to the *Huffington Post*, a sound method to determine the question of bias is challenging. One measurement is to examine the professionals who report the news. Overwhelmingly, national reporters who shape political coverage vote with the Democratic Party, and they have for some time. A 1972 poll showed that 70 percent of reporters voted for Nixon's opponent, George McGovern. A 1992 election study discovered that 89 percent of reporters voted for Bill Clinton, who received only 43 percent of the popular vote.

Studies that examine ideological slants also find that leading news outlets describe Republican and Democrat officials differently. David Brady and Jonathan Ma found that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* tend to treat liberal senators as cooperative bipartisans and malign conservative senators. Their study saw a distinct difference in favorable or unfavorable adjectives that preceded "liberal" or "conservative" in their reporting. These outlets too often painted liberal senators as bipartisan lawmakers and iconic leaders of a noble cause but portrayed conservatives as hostile, combative, and out of the mainstream.

In a study of 20 major print and TV news outlets, researchers found that only two leaned conservative, Fox News and *The Washington Times*, but the other 18 ranged from slightly to substantially left of center.

Contemporary Bias While professional journalists may still strive for objectivity, the increasing choices of media driven by writers and broadcasters of different ideological persuasions have in some cases made objectivity a minor concern at best. Slanted media predated the Internet, but now legacy outlets—*The New Republic*, *Slate*, and *Salon* on the left; *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard* on the right—mesh with other news sites, and readers may or may not discern source bias as they read their stories. Newer, born-on-the-web outlets, such as *Red State* or *Huffington Post*, are noticeably ideological. They and the nightly cable broadcasts provide diametrically opposite presentations and narratives of the same basic stories.

One Pew study at the end of the 2012 presidential election found President Obama received far more negative than positive coverage on Fox. About 46 percent of Fox stories on Obama were negative, while only 6 percent were positive (the remainder being neutral). The same study found MSNBC was harsher on Republican nominee Mitt Romney, where 71 percent of election stories were negative and only 3 percent were positive. Based on the viewership differences and where citizens are going to get their information online, people on the left and right have distinctly different information streams from those of people with mixed political beliefs.

Meanwhile, as "news sources" are playing fast and loose with journalistic norms, citizens are communicating more frequently via the Internet, and people are choosing more selectively what they read. People of like mind are supplying one another with a tailored diet of news and commentary that only confirms what they already believe. While the exercise of First Amendment rights allows people to read or not read what they want, the self-reinforcing and isolated loop of "news" is not helpful in developing consensus policy or in finding the best solutions for America's problems, nor is it helpful in understanding the alternative viewpoints.

Media and Democratic Debate

Scholar and political expert Cass Sunstein calls the phenomenon of people remaining in echo chambers of their own creation "cyberpolarization." He believes public life would be better served if people relied on what he calls "the general interest intermediary," streams of information from those traditional, objective outlets. Without these, the level of political knowledge of citizens is reduced, and the result is a decline in the quality of public debate. At least four factors affect the quality of public debate and level of political knowledge: increased media choices, ideologically oriented programming, consumer-driven media and technology, and the credibility of news sources.

Increased Media Choices

In 1960, the average American home received three television stations. By 2014, Nielsen Research estimated that the number had risen to nearly 200. Evening news telecasts on the Big Three networks changed very little from Presidents Kennedy to Clinton. Viewers could expect the time slots around the dinner hour and before bedtime to be reserved for news broadcasts. But

Media consumers have more choices than ever before as a result of producers appealing to niche markets. These often one-sided media outlets have also popped up in new media through podcasts, streaming content on YouTube, and social media outlets such as Twitter. The line between traditional journalistic content and uninformed citizen editorialization is often blurred.

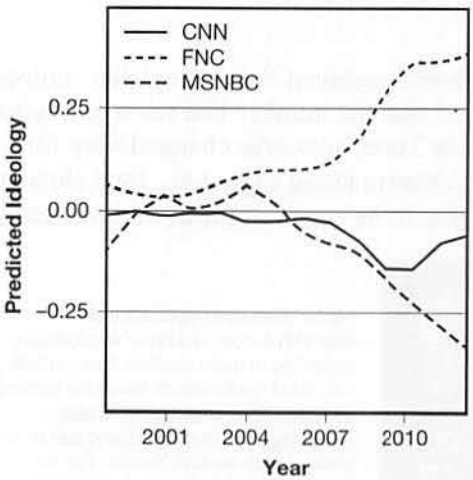
the explosion of cable news channels and their wide variety of programming have given consumers many more choices for their time in front of the TV. While at one time viewers were regularly exposed to the news no matter what channel they tuned to, now they can choose to watch entertainment of a seemingly endless variety instead. Studies have shown that while some people use the increased amount of news broadcasting to try to deepen their understanding of politics, others simply tune out news and politics by choosing to watch entertainment. This situation creates a gap not only in political knowledge but also in political participation because people with greater political knowledge turn out to vote more than people with less political knowledge. Public debate is diminished by the uneven distribution of political knowledge as well.

Ideologically Oriented Programming

Fox News is by far the most-watched cable news channel, outpacing its more centrist or liberal competitors CNN and MSNBC by a significant margin. The ideologically oriented programming on cable news channels has made the outlets a subject of great interest to political scientists, who ask a number of questions about their influence on voters and public debate. How much influence do the ideologically oriented news programs actually have on viewers, especially if viewers are attracted to a channel because they already share that channel's ideology?

A 2017 study by Emory University political scientist Gregory Martin and Stanford economist Ali Yurukoglu found that Fox News has a sizable influence on viewers' political attitudes, which in turn influence how they vote. They estimate that if Fox News hadn't been on the scene, John Kerry would likely have won the 2004 presidential election instead of George W. Bush.

Ideological Shifts in Cable News



Researchers Martin and Yurukoglu studied the changes over time of the liberal or conservative slant of CNN, FNC, and MSNBC. Their study focused on the choice of phrases used in broadcasts that convey different connotations. For example, does the broadcaster refer to the "war in Iraq" or the "global war on terrorism"? The researchers studied transcripts of broadcasts from 1998 to 2012 and then analyzed the results using a system for interpreting similar statistics on speech by members of Congress, whose voting records show their political slant. The higher the score, the more conservative the slant.

Source: Adapted from Martin and Yurukoglu 2017

They also found that CNN tried to develop its political ideology to match it to the maximize number of viewers it could attract, while Fox took a different approach. The political views of Fox are more conservative than those of their viewers, but Fox has had the effect of shifting their viewers' attitudes to the right. Fox is more successful at persuasion than the other cable news outlets and in this way is a major political agent.

As people are drawn to ideologically oriented programming, they demonstrate **confirmation bias,** the tendency to seek out and interpret information in a way that confirms what they already believe. They have no incentive, then, to consider opposing views, and yet the clash of ideas is vital for democratic debate and the democratic process. Sunstein writes, "Unplanned, unanticipated encounters [of ideas] are central to democracy itself. Such encounters often involve topics and points of view that people have not sought out and perhaps find quite irritating—but that might nevertheless change their lives in fundamental ways."

Consumer-Driven Media and Technology

Confirmation bias is evident on social media as well, where more than 60 percent of Americans get news. On Facebook, for example, people exchange political links and memes in a circle of like-minded friends, in the process reinforcing their own and other group members' beliefs and even accepting as true statements that have been proven false as long as they fit in with their beliefs.

While people are creating their own "bubbles" for information sharing, usually without critical evaluation, professionally trained journalists are being laid off and printing presses are shutting down. Reliable, ethical news outlets are disappearing. Cities that once had multiple newspapers that kept one another in check as they competed to provide the best news possible may now have only one paper.

Information outlets—newspapers, television stations, and radio stations—have always had to make decisions about what issues to cover, exercising their gatekeeper function. They considered what issues they believed would be most important to their consumers and assigned their resources to cover those issues accordingly. They always had to attract readers or go out of business. In today's highly competitive media environment, however, consumer-driven media has entered a new dimension. **Consumer-driven media** refers to media whose content is influenced by the actions and needs of consumers.

While at one time experienced professionals with a commitment to ethical journalism decided what to cover based on their best understanding of their consumers' interests and concerns, today such decisions are strongly influenced by the data that technology provides—what stories do people click on and read the most?

Now news companies and tech companies figure out what the average consumer will click on and generate stories from there. In other words, the role of gatekeeper has been passed on from experienced journalists to average

online surfers. Responsible news outlets still try to balance the forces of genuine newsworthiness and popular interests. But in the competitive media world, too often the citizen-gatekeepers, perhaps more interested in the Kardashians than foreign policy, have become the gatekeepers. When more trivial topics are covered at the expense of serious issues, the level of political knowledge and public debate declines.

Continuously monitored ratings provide similar data for television news stations, which now have to compete with not only other news stations but also a wide array of other programming—including on-demand services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. Some analysts believe the hunger for ratings contributed to Donald Trump's rise to the Republican presidential nomination among a field of experienced politicians. As journalist and Fox contributor Michael Goodwin explains, at first the media treated Donald Trump's candidacy as a publicity stunt, until "television executives quickly made a surprising discovery; the more they put Trump on the air, the higher their ratings climbed." Cable news shows started devoting hours to simply pointing the cameras at Trump as he gave off-the-cuff speeches at his rallies. By one estimate, Goodwin notes, Trump received so much free airtime that if it had been purchased, it would have cost $2 billion.

Managers of legacy news organizations are changing their business model and operating differently to survive. "Dependence generates desperation," laments Franklin Foer, former editor at the *New Republic*. "A mad, shameless chase to gain clicks through Facebook, a relentless effort to game Google's algorithms," has altered the role of one of progressive journalism's century-old magazines. When Google changes an algorithm—such as the rules by which autocomplete fills in possibilities after a user enters a few words to start, or the rules determining the order in which search results appear—web traffic can change significantly, benefiting some media companies and hurting others. In this way, tech companies can influence the ethics and ethos of an entire profession.

Credibility of News Sources

While Americans have more media choices and more control over what information to seek, consumers are simultaneously sent information from people with an agenda: friends and family who are of like mind, media sources with the goal of gaining more clicks, American political groups trying to impact public opinion, or American adversaries trying to stoke the flames of discord or to influence an election. The result is an era of dubious credibility and impulsive clicks.

Pew discovered when citizens access political news digitally, most often (46 percent of the time) they go to a news organization's website. Social media is the second most frequently used source, 31 percent of the time; 20 percent go through a search engine such as Google; and 24 percent seek out news links after receiving email alerts from a news organization or friend. Those who willingly go to a reliable news organization are more likely to get credible information.

Consumers are not always as responsible in their consumption of news as an informed and engaged citizenry would require. For example, this same Pew study found that citizens who received an article via social media could recall and name the original news outlet only 56 percent of the time. Another finding was that fully 10 percent cited "Facebook" as the news outlet, when of course Facebook is not a news outlet at all.

If indeed this is an era of consumer-driven media, then consumers demanding credibility and objectivity would have influence in the content news outlets provide. Author Clay Johnson in *The Information Diet* compares consumers' intake of news to their consumption of food and argues that the problem is not that people consume too much information but rather that they take in too much "junk" information. Just as people have to consciously make choices about healthy eating, they need to make responsible choices about news consumption. He advocates for education in media literacy so people can develop the critical evaluation skills needed to make informed choices about information.

THINK AS A POLITICAL SCIENTIST: *EVALUATE SOURCES*

Political scientists carefully consider the source of all the information they acquire. The following checklists will guide you as you evaluate your information sources and distinguish genuine from "fake" news.

Checklist for Evaluating Books

- ✓ What is the publication date? Is the book likely to include up-to-date information?
- ✓ What are the author's credentials? Read the book jacket, online catalog entries, or a biographical reference work to get information about the author.
- ✓ Is the author a recognized expert? See if other people frequently cite this author.
- ✓ Is there anything in the author's background or associations that might suggest a biased viewpoint?
- ✓ Who is the publisher? Major publishers, including university presses and government agencies, review what they publish and are likely to be reputable sources.

Checklist for Evaluating Print Articles

- ✓ When was the article published? Is the article likely to include up-to-date information?
- ✓ Who is the author? What are his or her credentials? You can find these in a note at the beginning or end of the article.

- ✓ Does the magazine or newspaper appeal to a special interest group that may have a biased viewpoint on the subject? For example, a magazine called *Free Enterprise* would probably have a conservative leaning and appeal to free market advocates who want only minimal government in people's economic lives. A periodical called *Equal Justice*, on the other hand, might appeal to liberals who expect the government to intervene when needed to guarantee equality.

Checklist for Evaluating Websites

- ✓ If you receive a link through social media, consider the views of the person or organization that sent it. What bias might that sender have?
- ✓ When you follow the link, start by identifying the top-level domain name. Is the site maintained by a for-profit company (.com) that might be trying to sell something? Is it an educational institution (.edu), which tends to be more reliable, or an independent organization (.org)? If it is an organization, is it one whose name you recognize or is it one that you have never heard of before? Be aware that ".org" sites are often owned by nonprofit organizations that may support a particular cause.
- ✓ If the website contains an article, is it signed? If it is not signed, you should be skeptical of its credibility. If you do not recognize the author's name, you can do a web search using the author's name as the keyword to get more information.
- ✓ Does it use reasonable and sufficient facts and examples from reliable sources to make its points?
- ✓ Is it free from obvious errors?
- ✓ Do the language and graphics avoid sensationalism?
- ✓ Has the site been recently updated? Is the information still current? Look for a date on the main web page indicating the last time it was updated.

Whether you are evaluating print or online sources, you will need to verify information by finding corroboration in a number of sources. Some errors may be obvious, but unless you check the facts and find an agreement about them among sources, you might miss some bias, misinformation, and outright untruths.

Practice: Choose several links you have received through one or more of your social media accounts and evaluate the information in the link by using the checklist for evaluating websites. Write your comments to each point on the checklist and share your comments with the class as your teacher directs.

REFLECT ON THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Essential Question: *How do changes in the media as a linkage institution influence political institutions and behavior?* On separate paper, complete a chart like the one below to gather details to answer that question.

Changes in the Media	Influence of the Media

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

affiliates/560
Associated Press (AP)/558
bandwagon effect/569
Big Three networks/560
broadcast network/560
Cable News Network (CNN)/561
commentary/567
confirmation bias/577
consumer-driven media/577
C-SPAN/565
editorial boards/569
editorials/566
Fairness Doctrine/571
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)/572
Fox News Channel (FNC)/572
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/564
free press/557
gatekeeper/569
Government Printing Office (GPO)/558
horse-race journalism/568
investigative reporting/559
mainstream media/574
narrowcasting/571
news bureaus/558
political analysis/568
political reporting/564
press conferences/565
scorekeeper/568
sound bites/564
talk radio/571
watchdog/570

Questions 1 and 2 refer to the passage below.

> Shortly after Richard Nixon resigned the presidency, Bob and I were asked a long question [which] we answered with a short phrase that we've used many times since to describe our reporting on Watergate and its purpose and methodology. We called it the "best obtainable version of the truth." It's a simple concept for something very difficult to get right because of the enormous amount of effort, thinking, persistence, pushback, removal of ideological baggage and the sheer luck that is required, not to mention some unnatural humility. Underlying everything reporters do in pursuit of the best obtainable version of the truth, whatever our beat or assignment, is the question "what is news?" What is it that we believe is important, relevant, hidden, perhaps, or even in plain sight and ignored by conventional journalistic wisdom or governmental wisdom?
>
> I'd say this question of "what is news" becomes even more relevant and essential if we are covering the president of the United States. Richard Nixon tried to make the conduct of the press the issue in Watergate, instead of the conduct of the president and his men. We tried to avoid the noise and let the reporting speak.
>
> —Reporter Carl Bernstein, White House Correspondents Dinner, 2017

1. Which of the following statements best summarizes Bernstein's views?
   (A) Journalists' egos often get in the way of determining what stories to cover.
   (B) For a variety of reasons, most journalism is unfortunately shallow.
   (C) Reporters use professional judgment about what to cover as they filter out a variety of distractions and follow the facts.
   (D) Partisan spokespeople color the facts and are not reliable sources of information.

2. Which of the following reasons likely explains why Bernstein thinks the question of "what is news" is especially important when covering the president?

(A) The question of "what is news" is easier to determine when covering Congress than the president.

(B) The president can get a strong message out to the public asserting his interpretation of events.

(C) The Freedom of Information Act provides access to virtually unlimited presidential documents.

(D) News reports about the president help increase a newspaper's circulation.

3. During political campaigns before an election, the news media is said to cover the campaigns like a horse race. Which of the following statements best explains the reason for this analogy?

(A) The press relies heavily on measurements like poll numbers as a constant comparison of candidates' relative success in a campaign.

(B) The results of an election, like the results of a horse race, can't be predicted until the very end.

(C) The candidates are groomed and trained for the campaign just as racehorses are groomed and trained for a race.

(D) As gatekeepers, members of the press officially begin the horse race.

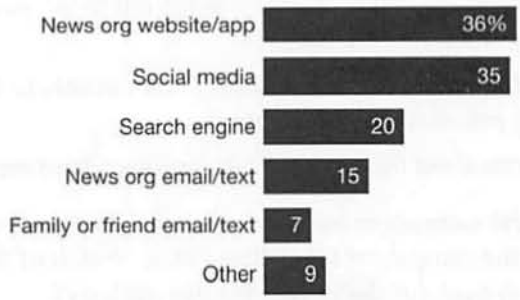
4. Which of the following is an accurate comparison of objective news and commentary?

	Objective News	Commentary
(A)	Factual accounts of events and people	Opinions of experts or people with political goals
(B)	Includes endorsements as long as they are on the editorial pages	Less common today than in the past and found in fewer places
(C)	Delivered by the guests on a talk show	Avoids criticizing government or government officials
(D)	A hallmark of talk radio after the removal of the Fairness Doctrine	Usually found on the front pages of traditional newspapers

Pathways to Online News

Twice a day for one week, online news consumers were asked **if they got news in the past two hours.**

When they did, average % of the times they got it through...



Note: Respondents were asked about the news they got on their main topic in each instance. Numbers add to more than 100% because respondents could report using more than one pathway in each survey.

"How Americans Encounter, Recall and Act Upon Digital News," Survey conducted Feb. 24-March 1, 2016

Source: *Pew Research Center*

5. Which accurately describes the information presented in the above chart?
   (A) People obtain news online mostly through social media or a news organization's website.
   (B) More Americans are getting news through social media than via television.
   (C) Most Americans use Google, Bing, or other search engines to find relevant news stories.
   (D) Texts from family and friends are what most often lead people to online news.

6. Which of the following is a reasonable conclusion based on the data in the graph?
   (A) Americans prefer watching video to reading text for their news.
   (B) News outlets face stiff competition for consumers.
   (C) Email will soon be the main way news outlets deliver news.
   (D) Search engines provide an unbiased index to the news.

7. Which of the following is a legitimate limitation to the information presented in the graph?

(A) The graph does not consider Twitter or Snapchat.

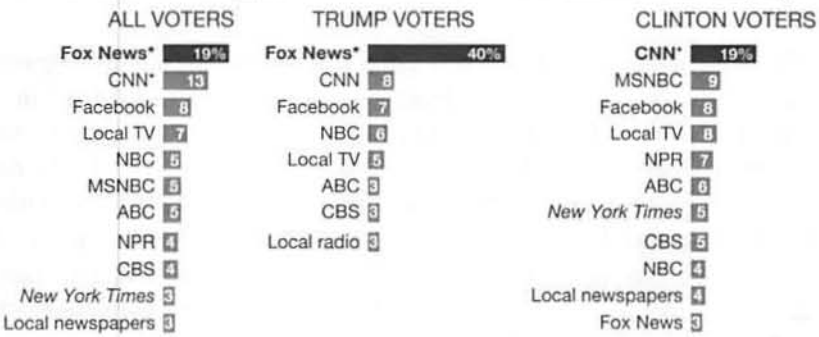
(B) The graph does not distinguish between email, text, and alerts.

(C) The graph fails to consider how often people get their news from word of mouth.

(D) The graph does not distinguish consumption of online news versus print media.

Main Sources of News for Voters in 2016 Presidential Election

% of voters who named__as their "main source" for news about the 2016 campaign



*Among this group of voters, this source was named at significantly higher rates than the source below it. Significance of any other relationships provided upon request.
Note: Sources shown are only those that were named by at least 3% of each group. Results are based on responses to open-ended questions; respondents could write in any source they chose.
Source: Pew Research Center survey conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016.
"Trump, Clinton Voters Divided in Their Main Source for Election News"

8. Which statement accurately reflects the information presented in the above illustration?

(A) More Clinton voters watched CNN than any other outlet for their election news.

(B) Trump voters tended to watch a wider variety of news outlets than Clinton voters.

(C) One of the Big Three led in viewership/audience when voters were asked what they watched for election news.

(D) For election news viewing, CNN ranked highest in all three categories.

9. What conclusion can you draw from the data in the information graphic?

(A) Fox News built its viewership on its reputation for credibility.

(B) Fox News targets conservatives as their niche audience.

(C) Trump voters tend to rely more on print journalism than television.

(D) Social media plays a very small role in getting election news.

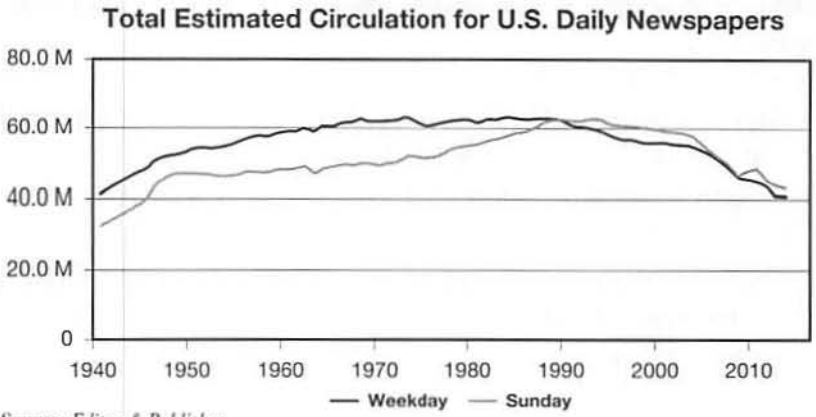
10. What is one effect of consumer-driven media?
    (A) It replaces content from professionals with content from nonexperts.
    (B) It increases the quality of public debate by engaging so many people.
    (C) It helps establish the importance of fact and research before sharing stories.
    (D) It overcomes ideological divides and brings people together.

FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1. "For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate . . . To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion. On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

    —Anchorman Walter Cronkite, CBS News Broadcast, 1968

    After reading the scenario, respond to A, B, and C below:
    (A) Describe the nature of the reporting in the passage above.
    (B) In the context of the passage, explain how the nature of reporting in part A affects elected officials.
    (C) In the context of the passage, explain how the media serves as a linkage institution.



Source: *Editor & Publisher*

2. Use the information graphic to answer the questions.
   (A) Identify a decade during which both weekday and Sunday circulation declined.
   (B) Describe a difference in the trend between weekday and Sunday circulation, and draw a conclusion about that difference.
   (C) Explain how newspaper circulation as shown in the graphic demonstrates the changing media landscape.

3. Jay Near was the publisher of a newspaper in Minneapolis in the late 1920s called *The Saturday Press*. In it he accused public officials of corruption in sensational exposes and took an anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, and anti-labor posture. A 1925 Minnesota state law known as the Public Nuisance Law or Minnesota Gag Law banned future publication of *The Saturday Press* on the grounds that its bigoted attitudes constituted a public nuisance. Near sued, arguing that the rights to a free press were violated. A state court upheld the ban, but the newly formed American Civil Liberties Union became interested in the case and it came before the Supreme Court in 1931 as *Near v. Minnesota*. In a 5:4 vote, the Court ruled that the state law preventing publication in advance was unconstitutional even if what was going to be published was untrue.
   (A) Identify the principle that is common to both *Near v. Minnesota* (1931) and *New York Times Co. v. United States* (1971). (See page 250.)
   (B) Based on the principle identified in part A, explain a difference between the facts of *Near v. Minnesota* and those in *New York Times Co. v. United States* (1971).
   (C) Describe an action that a person or organization could take after publication of a controversial, libelous, or offensive article.

4. Develop an argument that explains whether a free press is essential to democracy.

   In your essay, you must:

   - Articulate a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the prompt and establishes a line of reasoning.
   - Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of accurate and relevant information:
     - At least ONE piece of evidence must be from one of the following foundational documents:
       - First Amendment of the Constitution
       - *Brutus No. 1*
     - Use a second piece of evidence from the other document from the list above or your study of the media
   - Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim/thesis.
   - Respond to an opposing or alternative perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal.

WRITING: ***PLAN AND REVISE***

Take time before digging into your writing to gather your thoughts. What position are you taking? What evidence will you use to support that position? What are alternate positions? How will you respond to them? A graphic like the one below might help you prepare to write.

My position	
Evidence (include at least two pieces)	
Alternate positions	
Rebuttals	

Leave time to revise your essay after you complete a first draft. Check it over to make sure you have addressed each required task. Also check your organization and transitions. Does your essay flow smoothly? Read it over from the beginning with fresh eyes and try to make your ideas as clear as possible.

UNIT 5: Review

The chapters in Unit 5 have explored how political parties, interest groups, campaigns and elections, and the media are conduits to voters and democracy. If it weren't for parties, elections, interest groups, and the press, many American voices would never be heard, and fewer citizens would understand government. Political parties, very broad coalitions, choose candidates and try to place them into office. Countless people also have more narrowly tailored interests, and they coalesce to create interest groups. These groups represent everyone from police officers to Wall Street financiers. Many form Political Action Committees (PACs) and develop relationships with lawmakers. The pluralist theory holds that many interests are better than few and that they create opposing political forces and operate as a check and balance outside the Constitution. Because there is so much interest in who will govern and that winning elections takes so much money and public effort, the government has passed laws to properly and fairly administer elections. Most notably, the Congress created the Federal Election Commission to monitor campaign finance limits.

The media report on government, help set a national agenda, and often give their opinions. They have gone from party-financed printed publications to a fast-paced, interactive platform. Select language or images can heavily enhance or ruin candidates or stop a policy idea. Since the Supreme Court has ruled that government has no right to prior restraint, the freedom of the media to express a wide range of ideas is guaranteed.

THINK AS A POLITICAL SCIENTIST: *RESEARCH THE ROLE OF THE PRESS*

Political scientists, like journalists, ask and try to answer questions when doing research. In this chapter, for example, you read about the role of the press in the U.S. political system. What are some questions you might ask to create meaty question worthy of further research?

Practice: Look up the following articles: "GOP Security Aide Among Five Arrested in Bugging Affair," Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein (*Washington Post*, June 19, 1972) and "Donald Trump for President" (*Las Vegas Review-Journal*, November 7, 2017). Look at the headlines and dates, and consider the overall editorial slant of each of the publications. Determine the purpose of each article. Look for patterns that link and separate the two articles. Then write down a succinct theory about what they indicate about the role of the press in U.S. politics. Also identify two more questions for additional research.

Review Learning Objectives

As you review Unit Five, be sure you can complete the following learning objectives. Page numbers are provided to help you locate the necessary information to fulfill the learning objective.

UNIT FIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES	
MPA-3.A: Describe the voting rights protections in the Constitution and in legislation.	Pages 426–431
MPA-3.B: Describe different models of voting behavior.	Pages 438–440
MPA-3.C: Explain the roles that individual choice and state laws play in voter turnout in elections.	Pages 431–432, 443–444
PMI-5.A: Describe linkage institutions.	Page 424
PMI-5.B: Explain the function and impact of political parties on the electorate and government.	Pages 452–462
PMI-5.C: Explain why and how political parties change and adapt.	Pages 462–473
PMI-5.D: Explain how structural barriers impact third-party and independent candidate success.	Pages 473–477
PMI-5.E: Explain the benefits and potential problems of interest-group influence on elections and policy making.	Pages 519–528
PMI-5.F: Explain how variation in types and resources of interest groups affects their ability to influence elections and policy making.	Page 528
PMI-5.G: Explain how various political actors influence public policy outcomes.	Pages 535–545
PRD-2.A: Explain how the different processes work in a U.S. presidential election.	Pages 488–495
PRD-2.B: Explain how the Electoral College impacts democratic participation.	Pages 494–495
PRD-2.C: Explain how the different processes work in U.S. congressional elections.	Pages 499–501
PRD-2.D: Explain how campaign organizations and strategies affect the election process.	Pages 501–503
PRD-2.E: Explain how the organization, finance, and strategies of national political campaigns affect the election process.	Pages 503–511
PRD-3.A: Explain the media's role as a linkage institution.	Pages 557–563
PRD-3.B: Explain how increasingly diverse choices of media and communication outlets influence political institutions and behavior.	Pages 571–581

Five times in American history, the winner of the popular vote did not win the electoral vote. Hillary Clinton's loss to Donald Trump in 2016 is the most recent example. This possibility has led some to criticize the Electoral College system. Others see the process as a way to ensure balance and to guarantee that a consensus candidate becomes president. Gallup has found that more than 60 percent of those polled want a constitutional amendment to change the electoral system, while only about 33 percent want to keep it in its current form. A proposed constitutional amendment to scrap the system and replace it with a popular vote has been offered repeatedly in Congress for years.

BENEFITS OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE	DRAWBACKS OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE
• States retain their importance in electing the president.	• One candidate can win the popular vote and not win the electoral vote.
• Candidates must campaign and seek votes in most states rather than only heavily populated states.	• Electoral vote strength is higher, per capita, in smaller states.
• The practice guarantees a consensus president with broad support.	• The winner-take-all system discourages those who voted for the runner-up.
• States retain primacy if the election goes into the House and Senate.	• If the election goes to the House and Senate, these delegations can vote independently of their states.

The 2016 Presidential Campaign

The unusual 2016 presidential campaign is perhaps the worst example to study for understanding norms and trends in voting, campaigns, and elections, since it was dominated by an unconventional candidate. It drew the attention of more than 20 viable candidates, brought an intense intra-party contest in both major parties, set a new record for money spent, sparked attempts to manipulate election rules to stop that unconventional candidate, and took the candidates down in the mud like no other public campaign in memory.

The Frontrunners Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was the heir-apparent for the Democratic nomination. She stepped down after one term at the State Department. She had survived criticism and an FBI investigation into her use of a personal email server for official State Department and classified communications and had been exonerated.

Also entering the race was Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist and champion of the common person, promised to work for a $15 minimum wage, free college tuition at public universities, and a universal health care policy. Four other viable candidates took part in early Democratic primary elections but dropped out after failing to gain much support. The nomination quest came down to a race between Clinton and Sanders, one the darling of the elite wing of the party able to raise huge amounts of campaign money, the other bragging about his $27 average campaign donations.

On the other side was a field of 16 Republicans, some with executive experience or time in Congress. Young senators Ted Cruz (TX) and Marco Rubio (FL) entered the race. Governors Chris Christie (NJ), John Kasich (OH), and Jeb Bush (FL) all had a level of support. Dr. Ben Carson, a retired neurosurgeon from Michigan, also joined the race. New York real estate mogul and media hound Donald J. Trump, who had flirted with running for president more than once, announced in the summer of 2015 in an orchestrated descent down the escalator in golden Trump Tower that he was a candidate for the Republican nomination. The race was on.

Trump, Carson, and Cruz exchanged places for coming in first in the Iowa state polls leading up to the state's caucus vote, dwarfing the establishment candidates. It was clearly a year for the outsiders.

The pre-primary election campaigns were characterized by the enthusiastic chants for economic equality from Sanders crowds and Donald Trump's personal attacks against fellow Republican candidates. Trump's key promises involved tightening up the border with Mexico with a wall and repealing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (see page 404). He also found support among a Republican base by adopting a pro-gun, pro-life, pro-America position.

Caucuses and Primaries When Iowa held its caucuses in early February, Clinton beat Sanders by only two-tenths of one percent. In New Hampshire a week later, Sanders defeated her with 60 percent of the vote to Clinton's 38 percent. In the Republican contest, Cruz won the Iowa Republican caucuses with 28 percent, Trump came in second with 24 percent, and Rubio sneaked into third with 23 percent. In New Hampshire for the next round of rank-and-file party voters, Trump won with 35 percent, John Kasich came in second and kept his bid alive with 17 percent, and Ted Cruz came in third with 12 percent. The nation was in for a competitive nomination contest in both major parties.

Over the next few state primaries, Trump continually attacked whichever candidate seemed to pose a threat to him, creating insulting nicknames for them—"Low-energy Jeb," "Little Marco," and "Lyin' Ted." He continued to accumulate primary and caucus wins and was perhaps underestimated as a formidable presidential candidate.

The GOP contest got uglier. Trump pointed to a tabloid magazine story of Cruz's marital infidelity and alleged that Cruz's father, a Cuban immigrant, was somehow involved in JFK's assassination. With these tactics and others like them, Trump plowed over his opponents and clinched enough convention delegates after Indiana's primary vote on May 3 to become the Republican candidate. Cruz bowed out of the race that evening, and Kasich bowed out the next morning. Kasich never endorsed Trump; Cruz did so only after Trump won the nomination.

Nominees Over the remaining nine states, Trump, the only candidate still in the contest, received an average of 73 percent of the primary vote (some other candidates' names appeared on ballots, though they had withdrawn their candidacy). With some strong anti-Trump feelings within the Republican

Party, a few conservative leaders tried to stop Trump's nomination at the Cleveland convention with creative use of the technical delegate rules to nominate someone else. It didn't work.

For the Democrats, Clinton remained ahead of Sanders in the delegate count, but he won 23 of the 57 state and territorial contests through the spring. Though Clinton handily had the support of superdelegates and the delegates resulting from the primaries, in many ways Sanders won the heart and soul of the party. Despite his low average donation, he received more than $200 million in total campaign contributions. But she was the presumptive nominee.

"We are all standing under a glass ceiling right now," she said from a New York stage, and declared that this would be the "the first time in our nation's history that a woman will be a major party's nominee for president." Clinton carefully enjoyed the moment but did not yet claim the nomination. Sanders had yet to concede, and the official vote would take place at the convention.

Before conceding, Sanders wanted some of his policy positions to be added to the Democratic platform. After a White House meeting with President Obama and five days to think things over, he personally gave Hillary a full endorsement in a high school gym in New Hampshire. "She will be the Democratic nominee for president," he declared, "and I intend to do everything I can to make certain she will be the next president." A number of his ideas on the minimum wage, environmental regulations, and drug policy did influence the Democratic platform.

Campaign for the General Election As the post-convention campaign began, a late August poll showed perhaps the widest gap between the candidates, Clinton with 45 percent to Trump's 33. That gap narrowed. The candidates' respective poll averages from September through Election Day had Clinton outpolling Trump by only 45.5 percent to 42.2 percent.

Third-Party Candidates Some minor party candidates entered the race. Former Republican New Mexico governor Gary Johnson was the Libertarian nominee, and Dr. Jill Stein of Massachusetts received the Green Party nomination, as she had in 2012. Former CIA official Evan McMullen gave Republicans against Trump someone to vote for, but his name appeared only on the Utah ballot.

The general election campaign put a Democrat candidate from the heart of D.C. politics against a bombastic and sometimes crude TV persona whose most recent public gig was firing people on NBC's *The Apprentice*. By the time Trump earned the nomination, he had insulted prior Republican nominee John McCain for getting captured by the enemy in Vietnam. Trump had also questioned the judicial ethics of a federal judge because he was Hispanic, and he had refused to denounce the support of a head Ku Klux Klansman. Meanwhile, his heavily-attended rallies were characterized by altercations between Trump supporters and Democratic interlopers and harsh threats to members of the media. The party's most recent nominee, Mitt Romney, had suggested Republicans nominate "anybody but Trump."

An Ugly Campaign What followed was what many termed "a race to the bottom." Trump continued his unconventional and, to many, unstatesmanlike approach to campaigning, winning support among many middle-class workers who responded well to his America First ideology and the concern he expressed for average working persons who may have lost their jobs as industry steadily declined.

As of early October, Clinton's campaign had spent $145 million on TV commercials to Trump's $32 million. Trump, however, received an estimated $200 million in free media. Top cable news reporters stood by at his rallies awaiting his grand entrance and anticipating some shocking behavior or pronouncement that would boost ratings. Meanwhile, his "Make America Great Again" message resonated with those who felt shut out by traditional politicians. He had strong support among independents, who believed the Democratic party had gone soft on illegal immigration and no longer protected the American worker. He had capitalized on a cultural patriotism that put him in reach of defeating Clinton if he focused on the right states.

Meanwhile Clinton took a jab at some of Trump's supporters, referring to them as "a basket of deplorables." This pejorative phrase delivered at an expensive Democraticm Party fundraiser was likely directed at the pro-Trump Klansman and those ruffians hissing at reporters, but it was perceived by many as a broad-brush painting of any voter who did not support her. Trump strategists were able to turn the comment into another liberal elite's uptown view of Middle America.

The October surprise came with the release of a decade-old *Access Hollywood* video of Trump on a hot mic bragging about how he could have his way with women, kissing and grabbing them. When this news broke, he apologized before quickly pointing to Bill Clinton's dalliances, affairs, and aggressions toward women, suggesting that Hillary enabled this behavior. He invited Bill Clinton's past victims to the next televised debate to showcase the former president's behavior.

The campaign had sunk to a new low. Then, on October 28, then-FBI Director James Comey announced the FBI had come across a new batch of Clinton emails and felt compelled to let it be known that the FBI was obligated to examine these and warned that more investigation was possible. As it turned out, there was nothing new in those emails and the investigation was closed once again.

The Vote When citizen voters cast their popular votes on Tuesday, November 8, and such states as North Carolina, Florida, and Ohio went for Trump, the Clinton team became very nervous. Into the late evening and early morning, Trump won Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and by the closest of margins, Michigan. The networks and the pundits started calling the election. In the final tally, Trump won 306 electoral votes to Clinton's 232. However, Clinton's large-margin successes in states like New York and California took her over the top in the national popular vote. Once provisional and absentee ballots were counted, Clinton had 3 million more votes than Trump did. She received 48 percent of the

national total, he received 46, and the minor party candidates split the remainder. But with the winner-take-all system and the razor-thin victories in the Rust Belt (parts of the Northeast and Midwest where industry is in decline), Trump took the Electoral College. In his 2:45 a.m. victory speech, the president-elect said in a partially scripted and partly ad-lib address, "Now it's time for America to bind the wounds of division; have to get together. To all Republicans and Democrats and independents across this nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people."

Congressional Elections

All House seats and one-third of Senate seats are up for election every two years. Federal elections that take place halfway through a president's term are called **midterm elections**. The midterm elections receive a fraction of the media attention and fewer voters cast ballots. The Council of State Governments reports that since 1972, voter turnout in midterm elections is on average 17 points lower than in presidential elections. The down-ballot federal races that take place on the same day as presidential elections are overshadowed by the big contest. Yet, in terms of policymaking, these campaigns are important and deserve attention.

To compete in a modern campaign for the U.S. House or Senate, a candidate must create a networked organization that resembles a small company, spend much of his or her own money, solicit hundreds of contributions, and sacrifice many hours and days. Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio explains how a candidate "must hire a staff and make wise use of volunteers . . . craft a cogent, clear message . . . budget carefully in spending money on mail, radio, television and printed material . . . and be able to successfully sell the product—himself—to the public and to the media." Large campaigns divide these tasks into several categories, such as management, public relations, research, fundraising, advertising, and voter mobilization.

Incumbency As with presidential candidates, the incumbent in congressional elections has an advantage over a challenger. With rare exception, a congressional incumbent has a stronger chance of winning than the challenger.

The incumbent's financial and electoral advantage is so daunting to challengers that it often dissuades viable candidates from ever entering the race. House incumbents tend to win reelection more than 95 percent of the time. Senators have an incumbency advantage too, but theirs is not quite as strong. Incumbents capitalize on their popularity and war chest, showering their districts with mail and email throughout the congressional term. During campaign season, they purchase commercials and load up the district with yard signs while ignoring their opponent and sometimes refusing to take part in public debates.

Incumbents have several built-in advantages. Name recognition is a powerful factor. For two or more years, all federal incumbents have appeared

in the news, advocated legislation, and sent newsletters back to constituent voters. Nine out of ten voters recognize their House member's name, while fewer than six out of ten recognize that of the challenger.

Incumbents nearly always have more money than challengers because they are highly visible and often popular, and they can exploit the advantages of the office. They also already have a donor network established. **Political action committees (PACs)**, formal groups formed from interest groups, donate heavily to incumbents. PACs give $12 to an incumbent for every $1 they donate to a challenger.

Party leaders and the Hill Committees (see page 461) realize the advantage incumbents have and invariably support the incumbent when he or she is challenged in a primary. In the general elections, House representatives receive roughly three times more money than their challengers. Challengers receive a mere 9 percent of their donations from PACs, while House incumbents collect about 39 percent of their receipts from these groups.

A substantial number of incumbents keep a small campaign staff or maintain a campaign office between elections. Officeholders can provide services to constituents, including answering questions about issues of concern to voters, such as Medicare payments and bringing more federal dollars back home.

Certainly not all incumbents win. The single greatest predictor of an incumbent's loss is a poor economy while his or her party is in power. In hard economic times, the voting public holds incumbents and their party responsible.

In midterm elections, regardless of the condition of the economy, the president's party usually loses some seats in Congress. Based on results from five recent midterm elections, the president's party lost an average of 26.4 House seats and 3.6 Senate seats.

However, during presidential election years, congressional candidates can often ride the popularity of their party's presidential candidate. When a Democrat presidential candidate wins by wide margins, fellow Democratic congressional candidates down the ballot typically do well also. This is called the **coattail effect**.

Districts and Primaries Legislative elections in several states have resulted in one-party rule in the statehouse. When drawing congressional districts for the reapportionment of the U.S. House, these legislatures have gerrymandered congressional districts into one-party dominant units. (See page 106.) This situation dampens competitiveness in the general election. In 2016, only 33 House races, less than 10 percent, were decided by 10 points or less. Nearly three-quarters of all House seats were decided by 20 points or more.

These "safe" districts make House incumbents unresponsive to citizens outside their party, and they have shifted the competition to the primary election. Several candidates from the majority party will emerge for an open

seat, all trying to look more partisan than their competitors, while one or two sacrificial candidates from the minority party will run a grassroots campaign. When House incumbents do not act with sufficient partisan unity, candidates will run against them, running to their ideological extreme.

Campaign Strategies

Winning elections requires the expertise of professional consultants. These may include a campaign manager, a communications or public relations expert, a treasurer, an advertising agent, a field organizer, and a social media consultant. The campaign profession has blossomed as a consulting class has emerged. Staffers on Capitol Hill, political science majors, and those who have worked for partisan and nonprofit endeavors also overlap with political campaigns. Entire firms and partisan-based training organizations prepare energetic civic-minded citizens to enter this field that elects officials to implement desired policy.

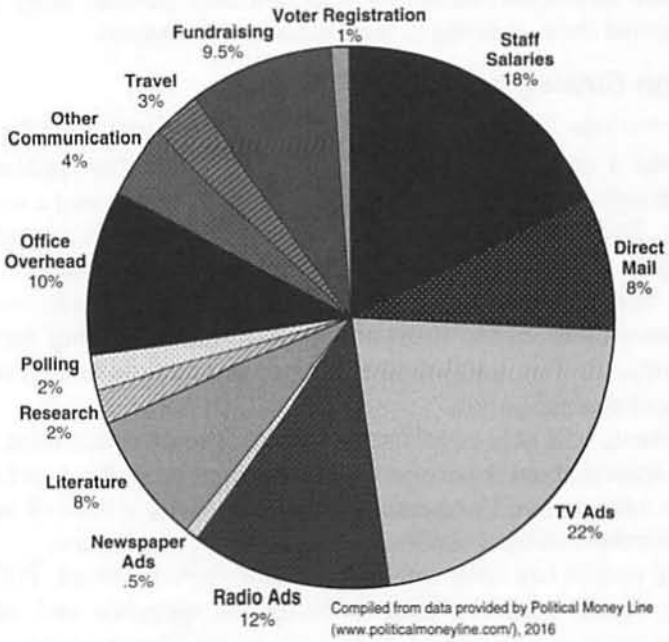
Consultants will help candidates understand what voters think. A typical campaign spends about 3 percent of its resources on polling and surveys to gather this information. Candidates also want to build a base of support and mobilize members of their coalition to get to the voting booths.

Polling results can help candidates frame their message. Polling helps determine which words or phrases to use in speeches and advertising. Campaigns occasionally use tracking polls to gain feedback after changing campaign strategy. They may also hold focus groups, and incumbents rely on constituent communication over their term. Candidates also keep an eye on Internet blogs, listen to radio call-in shows, and talk with party leaders and political activists to find out what the public wants. Campaigns also set up registration tables at county fairs and on college campuses. They gather addresses from voter registration lists and mail out promotional pieces that highlight the candidate's accomplishments and often include photos of the candidate alongside spouse and family. Campaigns also conduct robocalls, automated mass phone calls to promote themselves or to denounce an opponent.

Showcasing the Candidate Most voters, like most shoppers, make their decision based on limited information with only a small amount of consideration. For this reason, electronic and social media, television, and focus groups are essential to winning an election. A candidate's message is often centered on common themes of decency, loyalty, and hard work.

A typical campaign is divided into three segments: the biography, the issues, and the attack. Successful candidates have a unique story to tell. Campaign literature and television ads show candidates in previous public service, on playgrounds with children, on a front porch with family, or in church. These images attract a wide variety of voters. After the biography is told, a debate over the issues begins as voters shop for their candidate. Consultants and professionals believe issues-oriented campaigns motivate large numbers of people to come out and vote.

BY THE NUMBERS
Typical House Candidate Campaign Budget



Source: *Paul S. Herrnson, Congressional Elections, 2008*

What do the numbers show? What are the chief expenses in a House campaign? What portion of a candidate's expenditures are for marketing/showcasing the candidate? What percent goes to support staff or some type of research?

Defining the Opponent Candidates competing for independent voters find it necessary to draw sharp contrasts between themselves and their opponents. An attack phase begins later in the race, often motivated by desperation. Underdogs sometimes resort to cheap shots and work hard to expose inconsistencies in their opponent's voting records. Campaigns do opposition research to reveal their opponent's missteps or any unpopular positions taken in the past. Aides and staffers comb over the *Congressional Record*, old interview transcripts, and newspaper articles to search for damaging quotes. They also analyze an opponent's donor list in order to spotlight special-interest donations or out-of-state money.

Debates As the election nears, candidates participate in formal public debates, highly structured events with strict rules governing response time and conduct. These events are risky because candidates can suffer from gaffes (verbal slips) or from poor performances. Incumbents and front-runners typically avoid debates because they have everything to lose and little to gain. Appearing on a stage with a lesser-known competitor usually helps the underdog. For races with large fields, those organizations sponsoring the debates typically determine which candidates get to participate. Their decisions are sometimes based on where candidates stand in the polls.

Television Appearances The candidate's campaign team also strategizes about appearances on television, either in news coverage or in a commercial. Veteran Democratic speechwriter and campaign consultant Bob Shrum laments, "Things are measured by when a campaign will go on television, or if they can and to what degree they can saturate the air waves." (See page 458 for more on a candidate's television strategy.)

Social Media Connecting to voters via social media has become essential in campaigning. Campaigns use Facebook as a way to connect with other Facebook users. Also, for a fee, Facebook offers consultants from their company to political groups to help reach voters, much as they offer consulting connections to a corporation. As Trump's key digital campaign manager, Brad Parscale, explained on *60 Minutes*, the Trump team took Facebook's offer of help; the Clinton team did not.

The Facebook platform and technology allow campaigns to microtarget—identify by particular traits and criteria—independent voters who could be persuaded and learn what might persuade them. Perhaps an intense, issues-oriented ad would sway their opinions, or maybe the color of a button might enhance the chances for a donation. Marketers use psychographics—profiles of a person's hobbies, interests, and values—to create image-based ads that would appeal to certain personalities. Different personality types will see different ads.

Some of the ad systems or strategies employed dark ads, those that go to a particularly selected small audience and then disappear. It is suspected that campaigns have used these for shaky or even false messages, as there is less of a trail to connect them to their source. (See page 460.)

Campaign Finance

"There are two things that are important in politics," asserted political boss Mark Hanna more than 100 years ago. "The first is money, and I can't remember what the second is."

Hanna was neither the first nor the last politician to realize that money is at the heart of politics. The entanglement of money and politics reached new levels when people with unscrupulous business practices became fixtures in the political process in the late 19th century in an effort to influence and reduce the federal government's regulation of commerce. The bulk of today's relevant campaign finance regulations, however, came about much later—in the early 1970s—and other laws and Supreme Court decisions followed.

In 1971, Congress passed the **Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)**, which tightened reporting requirements and limited candidates' expenditures. Despite this law, spending in the 1972 presidential race between Richard Nixon and George McGovern reached $91 million. As the Watergate scandal unfolded, Americans became disenchanted with their president and with the flow of money in national politics. The White House-sponsored Watergate break-in and subsequent investigation was not initially about money, but

as investigators and reporters looked closer at the scandal, Americans soon realized how much money was going through the campaign process and how donors had subverted the groundbreaking yet incomplete 1971 act. Congress followed up with the 1974 amendment to the FECA.

The 1974 law prevented donors from giving more than $1,000 to any federal candidate and more than $5,000 to a political committee in each election (primaries and general elections are each considered "elections"). It capped the total a candidate could donate to his or her campaign and set a maximum on how much the campaign could spend. The law created the **Federal Election Commission (FEC)** to monitor and enforce the regulations. It also created a legal definition for political action committees (PAC) making donations to campaigns, declaring that they must have at least 50 members, donate to at least five candidates, and register with the FEC at least six months in advance of the election.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN ACT
• Limited an individual's contributions to $1,000 per election
• Limited a candidate's own contribution to $50,000 per election
• Defined and regulated donations of political action committees (PACs)
• Created a voluntary public fund to assist viable presidential candidates

Types of PACs Campaign finance laws define several different types of political action committees, distinguished by how they are formed, how they are funded, and how they can disperse their funds. Some also have different limits on the donation amount from individuals per year or election.

Connected PACs Corporations, labor unions, and trade organizations are not allowed to use money from their treasuries to influence elections. However, they are allowed to form **connected PACs**—political action committees funded separately from the organization's treasury through donations from members—and make limited campaign contributions in that way. Connected PACs are also known as Separate Segregated Funds (SSF) because of the way the money is separated from the sponsoring organizations' treasuries. They cannot solicit donations from anyone who is not a member of the organization.

Nonconnected PACs These political action committees have no sponsoring organization and often form around a single issue. They can solicit funds from anyone in the general public and they can make direct donations to candidates up to limits set by law. Like the connected PACs, nonconnected PACs must register with the FEC and disclose their donors.

Leadership PACs are a type of nonconnected PAC. They can be started by any current or former elected official and can raise money from the general public. Though they cannot be used to fund the officials own campaigns, funds in a leadership PAC can be used to cover travel and other expenses for other candidates.

Super PACs These are the newest kind of political action committee, whose creation resulted from the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* and the U.S. District Court ruling in *Speechnow v. FEC*, both cases decided in 2010. The *Citizens United* ruling opened the door for corporations to make political contributions to a committee as long as that committee did not formally coordinate with a candidate. (See page 471.) The *Speechnow* ruling determined that those contributions should have no limit placed on them.

TYPE	FORMED BY	REQUIREMENTS	DONATION LIMITS	EXAMPLE
Connected PAC (SSF—Separate Segregated Funds)	Corporations, labor unions, trade groups	Can collect contributions only from their members; can donate directly to candidates	Strict	Coca-Cola Company Nonpartisan Committee for Good Government KochPAC
Nonconnected PAC	No sponsoring (connected) organization	Can collect from general public; can donate directly to candidates	Strict	National Rifle Association Emily's List
Leadership PAC (type of nonconnected)	Current or former elected official	Can collect from general public; can donate directly to candidates	Strict	Leadership Fund (Mitch McConnell)
Super PAC (independent expenditure-only committee)	Anyone	Can collect from anyone; cannot coordinate with candidates	No limits	Vote Latino Super PAC Cryptocurrency Alliance Super PAC

***Buckley v. Valeo* (1976)** One of the first challenges to FEC law came with the case of *Buckley v. Valeo*. In January 1975, a group of conservatives and liberals joined to overturn the Federal Election Campaign Act in the courts. Conservative New York Senator James Buckley teamed up with Democratic senator and past presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the American Conservative Union to file suit against Secretary of the U.S. Senate Francis Valeo. They argued that the early 1970s law unconstitutionally limited free speech. The Court upheld the law's $1,000 limit on individual donations and the $5,000 limit on political action committee (PAC) donations, claiming such limits did not violate free speech guarantees. However, the Court also ruled that Congress cannot limit a candidate's donation to her own campaign or spending her own money, nor can it place a maximum on the overall receipts or expenditures for a federal campaign.

Fundraising

Since the passage of the early 1970s campaign finance laws, money and politics have gone hand in hand, yet most Americans have become concerned by one's influence on the other. Since the Federal Election Campaign Act created the Federal Election Commission to monitor donations and spending, the amount of cash that has flowed through federal elections has skyrocketed. Meanwhile, Congress has further regulated the campaign finance system while free-speech advocates have won concessions for less regulation.

Some candidates finance their own campaigns, but most rely on the party organization and thousands of individual donors for contributions. The size of a candidate's **war chest**, or bank account for campaigning, can play a role in determining victory or loss. The campaign for financial resources begins long before the campaign for votes. Fundraising allows candidates to test their chances. Those who can gather funds begin to prove a level of support that makes them viable. Most successful House candidates spend more than $1 million during a two-year campaign. In more competitive districts with strong media markets, that number will rise. To raise that cash over a two-year period, candidates spend about one-fourth of their campaign schedule making personal phone calls and holding formal fundraisers. Senate candidates, because they are running statewide and may attract wealthier opponents, begin raising money much earlier than House candidates and devote more time to soliciting cash. Senate candidates spend an average of $12 million and seek funds on a more national scale than House candidates.

The Internet became a campaign and fundraising tool in 1998. By 2002, 57 percent of all House candidates and virtually every Senate candidate used the Web or email to gather funds. This type of solicitation is free, compared with an average of $3 to $4 for every direct mail request. Candidates also hold parties, picnics, and formal dinners with higher-level officials or celebrities as guest speakers. The president or other high-level party leaders can attract many donors to such events. During the 2006 midterm campaigns, 23 Republican incumbents who hosted a visit by then-President George W. Bush raised 159 percent more money than GOP incumbents who did not host such a visit.

The Federal Election Commission

The FEC has unique structural traits so it can carry out several responsibilities. The president appoints the FEC's board of commissioners to oversee election law and the Senate approves them. This commission always has an equal number of Democrats and Republicans. The FEC requires candidates to register, or file for candidacy, and to report campaign donations and expenses on a quarterly basis. A candidate's entire balance sheet is available to the government and the public. The FEC has a staff of professionals that maintains these records and places the information online. The site www.fec.gov is a database that allows anyone to see which individuals or PACs contributed to the candidates and in what amounts.

The FEC also has a legal department that prosecutes candidates who do not follow the prescribed laws. From 1980 to 2005, the FEC was involved in more than 530 court cases and prevailed in 90 percent of the cases that went to court. From 2000 to 2013, the commission closed 2,623 cases and issued fines to candidates for late filing and non-filing that amounted to nearly $5 million.

Matching Money After the 1976 Supreme Court ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo*, Congress and the Court ultimately reached consensus that unlimited donations make for unfair elections. Despite the Court ruling in *Buckley*, however, television advertising and money became more important in campaigns as interest groups, politicians, and lawyers found loopholes in the law.

Also in 1976, the federal government established a system to offer some public financial support for presidential candidates who met the qualifications. In this system today, everyone who files a tax return is offered a chance to contribute $3 of taxes they already owe to be redirected to the presidential campaign fund. The federal government then uses that voluntarily directed money to match specified donations given to candidates in both the primary and general elections. In short, the federal government will match, dollar for dollar, individual donations of $250 or less. To qualify, candidates must contribute no more than $50,000 of their own money. They must also raise at least $5,000 in each of 20 states in increments of $250 or less. The guidelines for the federal matching money ensure that candidates have a broad base of support from smaller donors. Minor party candidates can qualify for matching money too, but only if the party's candidate won more than 5 percent of the vote in the prior election. This is the only public finance system for candidates across the United States.

The FECA only covered money going directly to and from a candidate's treasury. If a non-candidate wanted to spend money to impact an election—for example, to buy a radio ad for or against a candidate—there were no limits. **Hard money**, donations given directly to a candidate, could be traced and regulated. But **soft money**, donations to a party or interest group, was not tracked. Therefore the party could flood a congressional district with television ads that paint the opponent in a bad light, causing large, ultimately untraceable spending on electioneering at the end of a campaign. Unsurprisingly, soft money spending escalated.

Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act This situation brought greater attention to soft money's influence on elections and highlighted how much that influence was able to subvert the spirit of the 1970s reforms. Senators John McCain (R–AZ) and Russ Feingold (D–WI) had pushed for greater campaign finance regulations since the mid-1990s. After some modification, the **Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA)** of 2002, also known as the McCain-Feingold law, finally passed the House with a 240–189 vote and the Senate with 60–40 vote, and President Bush signed it. The act banned soft money contributions to the national parties, increased the limits on hard money donations to $2,000 from individuals with an adjustment for inflation, $5,000 from PACs, and $25,000 from the national parties per election cycle. The law

also placed an aggregate limit on how much an individual could donate to multiple candidates in a two-year cycle.

The BCRA prohibited corporations, trade associations, and labor organizations from paying for electioneering communications on radio or TV using campaign treasury money within 60 days of the general election and 30 days of a primary. To clear up who or what organization is behind a broadcasted advertisement, the McCain-Feingold law also requires candidates to explicitly state, "I'm [candidate's name] and I approve this message." That statement must last at least four seconds.

Though the law was dubbed bipartisan, the vote in Congress and the reaction to the law has been somewhat partisan, with more Democratic support than Republican. It was challenged immediately by a leading Republican in the courts, and largely upheld. The 2010 case of ***Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)***, however, overturned key parts of the law.

MUST-KNOW SUPREME COURT DECISIONS: *CITIZENS UNITED V. FEC* (2010)

The Constitutional Questions Before the Court: Does the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act's (McCain-Feingold law) donation disclosure requirement violate the First Amendment's free speech clause, and is a negative political documentary that never communicates an expressed plea to vote for or against a candidate subject to the BCRA?

Decision: No and Yes for Citizens United, 5:4

Before *Citizens United*: *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) upheld the limits on campaign contributions from individuals ($1,000) and PACs ($5,000) but ruled that candidates could contribute unlimited funds from their own money to their campaigns. It also ruled that there was no limit on total revenue or expenditures for campaigns.

Facts: The BCRA prevented corporations or nonprofit agencies from engaging in "electioneering communications," primarily TV and radio campaign ads, 60 days before the general election. In 2008, the conservative group Citizens United produced *Hillary: The Movie*, a critique meant to derail Hillary Clinton's chance for the presidency. The law prevented the film's airing, regarding it as "electioneering communications," but the group appealed to the Supreme Court. The opportunity to broadcast the movie had passed by the time the Court issued its ruling, which has had a dramatic impact on campaign financing.

Reasoning: The Court ruled that part of the BCRA violated the First Amendment's free speech clause and that corporations, labor unions, and other organizations could use funds from their treasuries to endorse or denounce a candidate at any time, provided ads are not coordinated with any candidate. The majority opinion reasoned that the limitations amounted to censorship.

The Court reasoned further that just because a PAC or any entity entitled to free speech supports a candidate via advertising, that candidate does not necessarily

owe anything to that PAC. There's no assumption that the donation is buying a favor from the candidate, which in any event is already criminal and punishable by statute.

The Court's Majority Opinion by Mr. Justice Anthony Kennedy, joined by Chief Justice John G. Roberts and Justices Antonin G. Scalia, Samuel A. Alito, and Clarence Thomas: The law before us . . . makes it a felony for all corporations—including nonprofit advocacy corporations—either to expressly advocate the election or defeat of candidates or to broadcast electioneering communications within 30 days of a primary election and 60 days of a general election . . . These prohibitions are classic examples of censorship. . . . Were the Court to uphold these restrictions, the Government could repress speech by silencing certain voices at any of the various points in the speech process. . . . If [this part of the law] applied to individuals, no one would believe that it is merely a time, place, or manner restriction on speech. Its purpose and effect are to silence entities whose voices the Government deems to be suspect.

Speech is an essential mechanism of democracy, for it is the means to hold officials accountable to the people. The right of citizens to inquire, to hear, to speak, and to use information to reach consensus is a precondition to enlightened self-government and a necessary means to protect it. . . .

For these reasons, political speech must prevail against laws that would suppress it, whether by design or inadvertence. . . . .

We find no basis for the proposition that, in the context of political speech, the Government may impose restrictions on certain disfavored speakers. Both history and logic lead us to this conclusion.

The Court, like the country, split along ideological lines. Those dissenting argued that corporations are not people and do not have the same rights, and that limiting corporate money in local and national elections would be favorable to fair, democratic elections.

Dissenting Opinion by Mr. Justice John Paul Stevens, joined by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen G. Breyer, and Sonia Sotomayor:

The Court's ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. . . .

It is simply incorrect to suggest that we have prohibited all legislative distinctions based on identity or content. Not even close. . . We have, for example, allowed state-run broadcasters to exclude independent candidates from televised debates. We have upheld statutes that prohibit the distribution or display of campaign materials near a polling place. . . . And we have consistently approved laws that bar Government employees, but not others, from contributing to or participating in political activities . . . .

The same logic applies to this case with additional force because it is the identity of corporations, rather than individuals, that the Legislature has taken into account. . . .

> The Court's blinkered and aphoristic approach to the First Amendment may well promote corporate power at the cost of the individual and collective self-expression the Amendment was meant to serve. It will undoubtedly cripple the ability of ordinary citizens, Congress, and the States to adopt even limited measures to protect against corporate domination of the electoral process.

Since *Citizens United*: In 2014, in *McCutcheon v. FEC*, the Supreme Court ruled that the limit on how much a donor can contribute over a two-year election cycle was unconstitutional. To stay within that limit, the plurality of the Court argued, donors who could afford to give the maximum amount to a number of candidates would have to rule out some candidates and causes they might also wish to support. In that way, the Court ruled, their freedom of expression was unconstitutionally limited.

Political Science Disciplinary Practices: Analyze and Interpret Supreme Court Decisions

As you analyze the ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* (or any other court case or law), compare it to other related cases or laws. Identify specific categories for comparison. If you are comparing Supreme Court cases, for example, the categories for comparison might include the constitutional principle at stake, the facts of the case, the decision, the makeup of the court, the historic time of the decision, and dissenting opinions, among others. Creating these specific and relevant categories will help you sharpen the comparisons you make.

Apply: Complete the activities below.

1. Explain the Court's ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo*.
2. Describe the facts of the *Citizens United v. FEC* case and the congressional regulation at issue.
3. Describe the claim the group Citizens United made about BCRA.
4. Explain how the Court's reasoning in *Citizens United* led to its ruling.
5. Relate the ideas expressed in *Federalist No. 10* to the decision in *Citizens United*.
6. Identify specific categories you can use as a basis of comparison between the case of *Citizens United* and the case of *Buckley*, and then describe similarities and differences.

Impact of Citizens United

Debates over free speech and competitive and fair elections have increased since *Citizens United*. Free speech advocates, libertarians, and many Republicans view most campaign finance regulations as infringements on their freedoms, so they hailed the ruling. Others agreed with President Obama when he criticized the ruling at his 2010 State of the Union address as a decision that would "open the floodgates to special interests."

Dark Money In addition to allowing ads by outside or soft money groups immediately before an election, the Court's ruling also allowed for unlimited contributions to these groups from individual citizens and other organizations. This dark money has penetrated political campaigning, causing a lack of transparency about where the money originates. Even though political ads must express who is behind them, determining exactly where the money ultimately comes from is hard to do.

"*Citizens United* changed the culture at the same time that it changed the law," according to Zephyr Teachout, Fordham University law professor and author of *Corruption in America*. "Before *Citizens United*, corporate or individual money could be spent with a good enough lawyer. But after *Citizens United v. FEC*, unlimited corporate money spent with intent to influence was named, by the U.S. Supreme Court, indispensable to the American political conversation."

The ruling also concentrates who dominates the political discussion. Five years after the ruling, the Brennan Center at New York University found that of the $1 billion spent, about 60 percent of the donations to PACs came from 195 people or couples. More recently, an analysis by OpenSecrets.org found that during the 2016 election cycle, the top 20 individual donors gave more than $500 million to PACs. The 20 largest organizational donors also gave a total of more than $500 million to PACs. And more than $1 billion came from the top 40 donors. About one-fifth of political donations spent in all federal elections in 2016 came from dark money sources.

In the 2016 election cycle, special interests spent at least $183.5 million in dark money, up from $5.2 million in 2006. Of that, liberal special interests spent at least $41.3 million, or 22.5 percent; conservatives spent most of the rest.

Though Democrats are more prone to use *Citizens United* as a rallying cry against corporate special interests, Democrats have also benefitted from the ruling. As Sarah Kleiner of the Center for Public Integrity points out, "Many Democrats have taken full advantage of the fundraising freedoms *Citizens United* has granted them." Candidate Hillary Clinton, especially, "benefited from a small army of super PACs and millions of dollars in secret political money." More specifically, in 2016 the Clinton presidential campaign received 18 percent of its contributions, about $220 million, from such sources, whereas Trump received 12 percent of his overall contributions, or roughly $80 million, from PACs.

REFLECT ON THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Essential Question: How do electoral processes and campaign finance laws affect political participation? On a separate paper, complete a chart like the one below to gather details to answer that question.

Issue	Effect on Political Participation
Electoral Process	
Campaign Finance Laws and Rulings	

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) (2002)/507
blanket primary/489
Buckley v. Valeo (1976)/505
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Citizens United v. FEC (2010)/508
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