

APGoPo Unit 4

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR ORGANIZATION

THREE COMPONENTS OF PARTIES

Party-in-Government

Party leaders occupy positions in:

- Presidency
- Congress
- State governors
- State legislatures
- Local governments (though sometimes these are nonpartisan positions)

Party-in-Electorate

- Registered Democrats
- Democratic identifiers/leaners
- Registered Republicans
- Republican identifiers/leaners

Party Organizations

Parties are decentralized along federal lines

- National level
 - National Convention. Highest authority
 - National Committee. When convention not in session
 - National Chairperson
 - Congressional Campaign Committees (for House seats)
 - Senate Campaign Committees
- State Committee
- Local Committees: city, ward, precinct levels
- Neither DNC or RNC can "punish" state/local committees if they stray from the party line – again, parties are decentralized

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

A political party must have an effective organization to accomplish its goals. Both of the major parties are organized in much the same manner. Both parties are highly decentralized, or fragmented. The people at the top of the party organizations do not have a lot of power over those at the lower levels. Instead, the parties have strong grass roots, or state and/or local control over important decisions. The party of the president is normally more solidly united than the opposition. The president is automatically considered the party leader, while the opposition is often without a single strong leader. Usually one or more members of Congress are seen as the opposition leaders.

National Convention

The national convention serves as the party's national voice. Party delegates meet in the summer of every fourth year to select the party's candidates for president and vice president. They are also responsible for writing and adopting the party's platform.

National Committee

The national committee manages the political party's business between conventions. They are responsible for selecting the convention site, establishing the rules of the convention, publishing and distributing party literature, and helping the party raise campaign contributions.

National Chairperson

The party's national committee, with the consent of the party's presidential nominee, elects the national chairperson. The chairperson is responsible for directing the work of the national committee from their national headquarters in Washington, D.C. The chairperson is involved in fundraising, recruiting new party members, encouraging unity within the party, and helping the party's presidential nominee win election.

Congressional Campaign Committee

Each party has a committee in the House of Representatives and Senate that works to ensure the election or reelection of the party's candidates by raising funds and determining how much money and support each candidate will receive. The committee often works to defeat an opposition party member who appears weak and might be open to defeat.

State and Local Organization

State law largely determines state and local party organization. Differences exist from state to state; however, state and local parties are structured in much the same way as the national party organization. Local party organizations are still very important in political campaigns because they provide the foot soldiers that hand out party literature, call on citizens to register and to come to the polls on election day.