Political Parties and Interest Groups

I. Reviewing the Chapter

Chapter Focus

First, this chapter provides a detailed exploration of one unique aspect of American politics: political parties, with emphasis on the two-party system. Second, the chapter surveys the wide variety of interest groups or lobbies that operate in the United States and also assesses the impact they have on the political system. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, you should be able to do each of the following:

1. Define the term political party and contrast the structures of the European and American parties, paying particular attention to the federal structure of the American system and the concept of party identification.

2. Trace the development of the party system through its four periods, and offer reasons that parties have been in decline since the New Deal period.

3. Describe the structure of a major party and distinguish powerful from powerless party organs. Discuss the difference between “representational” and “organizational” party structures, and indicate why the Democrats use one system and the Republicans another.

4. Define intraparty democracy and state its effect on the last few Democratic nominating conventions in the last few contests. Evaluate the relative strengths of state party bosses in recent years, and discuss the increasing importance of primaries in relation to the boss system at conventions.

5. Describe the machine, discuss its functions, and trace its decline. Contrast its structure with that of ideological and reform parties.

6. Offer two explanations for the persistence of the two-party system. Explain why minor parties form, and discuss different kinds of parties. Analyze why they are so rarely successful.

7. Describe some of the issue differences between delegates at Democratic and Republican conventions, and indicate whether there are major differences between the parties.

8. Explain why the characteristics of American society and government encourage a multiplicity of interest groups, and compare the American and British experiences in this regard.

9. Describe the historical conditions under which interest groups are likely to form, and specify the kinds of organizations Americans are most likely to join.
10. Describe relations between leaders and rank-and-file members of groups, including why the sentiments of members may not determine the actions of leaders.

11. Describe several methods that interest groups use to formulate and carry out their political objectives, especially the lobbying techniques used to gain public support. Explain why courts have become an important forum for public interest groups.

12. List the laws regulating conflict of interest, and describe the problems involved with “revolving door” government employment.

Study Outline

I. Parties—Here and Abroad
   A. Party definition: a group that seeks to elect candidates to public office by supplying them with a label. It operates in three arenas.
      1. In the minds of the voters
      2. As an organization for recruiting and campaigning
      3. As a set of leaders in government
   B. European parties more centralized
      1. Party the only route to nomination
      2. Elected officials vote with the party
   C. American parties quite decentralized: federalism, laws, and primaries weaken control of government
   D. Political culture
      1. Parties unimportant to average American
      2. Parties dominate more in Europe with dues and meetings

II. The Rise and Decline of the Political Party
   A. The Founding
      1. Founders’ dislike of factions
      2. Emergence of Republicans instead of Federalists as parties of elites
   B. The Jacksonians: mass political participation due to more voters being eligible
      1. Political participation a mass phenomenon
   C. The Civil War and sectionalism
      1. Jacksonian system unable to survive slavery issue
      2. Republicans become dominant due to Civil War
   D. The era of reform
      1. Progressive push measures to curtail parties (primary elections, civil service, etc.)
      2. Effects: made parties weaker but also political corruption reduced

III. The National Party Structure Today
   A. Party organization: a loose structure
      1. Role of national convention
      2. Role of national committee
      3. Republicans: bureaucratized party operating as consulting firm
      4. Democrats: factionalized party but changing to compete
      5. National committees raise both federal and soft money
   B. National conventions
      1. National committees issue call, set selection rules
      2. Actual formulas very complex
      3. Manner of choosing delegates is important
      4. Current Democratic rules: weaken influence of party leaders
5. Consequences of reforms: delegates ratify decisions of voters; parties attract different white-collar voters

IV. State and Local Parties: Key Party Organizations in the United States
A. The machine
1. Recruitment via tangible incentives—money, jobs, and favors
2. High degree of leadership control
3. Abuses controlled by reforms (example: Hatch Act)
4. Both self-serving and public regarding
5. New style machine: campaign funds knit politicians
B. Ideological parties
1. Principle above all else but contentious
2. Usually a third party
3. But some local reform clubs (New York, California)
4. Often intense factionalism within clubs
C. Solidary groups
1. Most common form of party organization
2. Members motivated by sociable enjoyment/friendships
3. Neither corrupt nor inflexible, not hard working
D. Sponsored parties
1. Created or sustained by another organization
2. Example: Detroit Democrats controlled by UAW
3. Not very common
E. Personal following
1. Examples: Kennedys, Curleys, Talmadges, Longs; candidates need own money
2. Viability today, affected by TV and radio
3. Advantage: vote for the person but harder to know with so many candidates
4. Disadvantage: takes time to know the person and disbands after election

V. The Two-Party System
A. Rarity among nations today
B. Evenly balanced nationally, not locally
C. A permanent feature due to electoral laws and public opinion
D. The two-party system caused by electoral laws
1. Single member not proportional representation
2. Plurality to win
3. Electoral College good example
E. The two-party system caused by public opinion
1. Two broad voter coalitions but back agreement on values
2. Minor parties have difficult time since major party accommodates dissidents (see CHAPTER BOX)

VI. Nominating a President
A. Are the delegates representative of the voters?
1. Democratic delegates much more liberal
2. Republican delegates much more conservative
3. Explanation of this disparity? Revise rules on delegate selection
B. Who votes in primaries and caucuses?
1. Primaries now more numerous and more decisive
2. Primary voters apparently more ideological
3. Caucuses overrepresent activist opinion even more
C. Who are the new delegates?
1. However chosen, today’s delegates a new breed—unlikely to resemble average citizen; usually ideologically motivated activists
2. Increase in partisan loyalties and voting among Americans since 1980s
3. Advantages of new system include significance of activists but favors candidate with strong views
4. Disadvantage: may nominate presidential candidates unacceptable to voters or rank and file

VII. Do the Parties Differ?
A. George Wallace: “not a dime’s worth of difference”
B. Some differences between party rank/files
C. Greater ones among activists/leaders/officials
D. Candidate many need to appeal to extremes rather than center to win nomination

VIII. Interest Groups and Political Parties
A. The proliferation of interest groups
   1. Many kinds of cleavage in the country
   2. Constitution makes for many access points
   3. Political parties are weak
B. Interest group activity varies over time
   1. Since 1960, proliferation began
   2. 1770s, independence groups
   3. 1830s and 1840s, religious, antislavery groups
   4. 1860s, craft unions
   5. 1880s and 1890s, business associations
   6. 1900s and 1910s, most major lobbies of today
C. Factors explaining the rise of interest groups
   1. Broad economic developments
   2. Government policy itself
   3. Emergence of strong leaders, usually at certain times
   4. Expanding role of government in a given area

IX. Kinds of Organizations
A. Institutional interests
   1. Defined: individuals or organizations representing other organizations
   2. Types: business firms (e.g., General Motors and trade/governmental associations)
   3. Concerns—bread-and-butter issues
   4. Other interests—governments, foundations, universities
B. Membership interests
   1. Americans join some groups more frequently than in other nations: sense of duty
   2. Most sympathizers do not join
C. Incentives to join membership organizations
   1. Solidary incentives—pleasure, companionship (League of Women Voters, AARP, NAACP, Rotary, etc.)
   2. Material incentives—money, things, services (farm organizations, retired persons, etc.)
   3. Purpose of the organization itself—public-interest organizations (e.g., Ralph Nader’s PIRGs)
D. Influence of the staff
1. Staff influence the greatest in groups based on solidary and material incentives
2. Interest group behavior: more staff wants than members’ beliefs

X. Funds for Interest Groups
A. Foundation grants
   1. Public-interest groups dependent
   2. From 1970 to 1980, Ford Foundation contributed $21 million
B. Federal grants and contracts
   1. National Alliance for Business and summer youth job programs
   2. Money given to project, not group
   3. Cutbacks in early 1980s under Reagan administration
C. Direct mail
   1. Unique to modern interest groups
   2. Letters must generate 2-3 percent check return

XI. Problem of Bias
A. Reasons for belief in upper-class bias
   1. More affluent more likely to join
   2. Business/professional groups more numerous; better financed
B. Why these facts do not decide the issue
   1. Describe inputs not outputs; groups better at blocking than passing laws
   2. Groups often divided among themselves
C. Important to ask what the bias is
   1. Many conflicts are within upper middle class
   2. Pluralist view was probably wrong in the 1950s

XII. Activities of Interest Groups
A. Information
   1. Single most important tactic; access depends on credible information
   2. Most effective on narrow, technical issues
   3. Officials also need cues; ratings systems
B. Public support
   1. In the past, lobbyists used mainly insider strategy
   2. Increasingly, lobbyists use outsider strategy
   3. Central to outsider strategy is grass-roots lobbying
   4. Some groups try for grass-roots support (abortion, Medicare, Social Security, environmental protection, and affirmative action issues)
C. Money and PACs
   1. Greatest flow since attempted regulation
   2. Number of PACs quadrupled from 1975 to 1982
   3. Rise of the ideological PAC; most conservative
   4. Average corporate PAC donation modest
   5. Most PAC donations go to incumbents in Congress
   6. No evidence yet that PACs influence voters, except where voters have no interest and/or any guide for ideology
D. The “revolving door”
   1. Promise of future jobs to officials
   2. Few conspicuous examples of abuse
E. Demonstrations
   1. Disruption always part of American politics
   2. Used by groups of varying ideologies, etc.
   3. Better accepted since 1960s and now conventional
4. History of “proper” persons using disruption: suffrage, civil rights, antiwar movements
5. Officials dread no-win situation

XIII. Regulating Interest Groups
A. Protection by First Amendment
B. 1946 law accomplished little in requiring registration
C. New lobby act enacted by Congress (Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995)
   1. Broadens definition of a lobbyist
   2. Lobbyists must report twice annually
D. Significant restraints prior to 1995 still in effect
   1. Tax code: threat of losing tax-exempt status
   2. Campaign finance laws limit size of contribution
   3. Limits of new law and no enforcement organization created

Key Terms Match

Match the following terms and descriptions.

a. caucus
   1. ___ Any group that seeks to influence public policy.
   2. ___ Individuals or groups representing other organizations.
b. direct mail
   3. ___ The sense of pleasure, status, or companionship arising from group membership.
c. federal money
   4. ___ Money, things, or services obtainable from interest group membership.
d. Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946
   5. ___ An organization whose goals, if realized, would benefit primarily nongroup members.
e. ideological parties
   6. ___ The solicitation of funding through letter campaigns.
f. institutional interests
   7. ___ The school of thought that believes that the American political system features the free, complete, and open conflict of diverse interest groups.
g. interest group
   8. ___ An organization frequently created by a corporation or labor union which supports candidates and legislation in the group’s interest.
h. material incentives
i. national party convention
j. personal following
   9. ___ The 1946 attempt of Congress to regulate the activities of interest groups.
k. political action
   10. ___ A political party organization that recruits its members by the use of tangible incentives and is characterized by a high degree of leadership control over members’ activities.
l. pluralist
m. political machine
   11. ___ A political party organization built around allegiance to a particular candidate.
Did You Think That…?

A number of misconceptions are listed below. You should be able to refute each statement in the space provided, referring to information or argumentation contained in this chapter. Sample answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

1. “National party organizations control state and local parties.”

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. “The Founders believed that a party system was essential for democracy.”

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. “The delegates to national party conventions have accurately reflected the sentiments of rank-and-file members.”

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
4. “There is not a dime’s worth of difference between the two major parties.”

5. “All major interests are represented by national associations of interest groups.”

6. The unorganized are unrepresented in American politics.”

7. “The most effective way for interest groups to advance their causes is to buy influence with money.”

8. “The use of public displays and disruptive tactics to further a political cause began in the 1960s with the protests against the Vietnam War and the civil rights demonstrations.”

Data Check

**Table 5.1: Campaign Spending by Democrats and Republicans, 1998**

1. Which type money—federal or soft—do both Democrats and Republicans raise and spend the most in campaigns?

2. Which political party raises and spends the most in both federal and soft money in campaigns?
Table 5.3: Policy Preferences of Democratic and Republican Voters (2000)

3. On what issue do Democratic and Republican voters appear to differ most widely?

4. On the issue of Social Security, voters of which party are more likely to believe that people should be allowed to invest part of it on their own?

5. On what issue do Democratic and Republican voters appear to differ least widely?

6. If you were a Democratic voter, what would your position probably be on the issue of government regulating the environment? On school vouchers?

Table 5.5: Spending by Political Action Committees (PACs), 1998

7. Of the categories of PAC sponsors listed in the left part of the table, which ones provided more support to candidates for the House than to candidates for the Senate in 1998?

8. Which category of PAC sponsors provided vastly more support to Democratic candidates than to Republican ones in the 1998 election?

9. What conclusions can be drawn after comparing the PAC contributions received by incumbents and those received by challengers from all categories of PAC sponsors?

II. Practicing for Exams

True/False. Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements T. If any part of the statement is false, mark it F, and write in the space provided a concise explanation of why the statement is false.

_____ 1. In Europe candidates for office must seek nomination from the party apparatus.

_____ 2. The fact that one party can control Congress and the other the presidency is related to the decentralization of American parties.
3. The Founders recognized the inevitability of political parties and encouraged their formation.

4. Republican control of national politics lasted only from Reconstruction to the turn of the twentieth century.

5. Over the past three decades, the Republican party has been better organized, better financed, and more effective than the Democratic party.

6. Democratic convention rules were changed in 1981 so as to allow more elected officials to become delegates.

7. Winner-take-all primaries played a major role in the 1992 election.

8. Big-city machines were caused by the floods of immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and elsewhere in the late nineteenth century.

9. Party machines tend to be highly ideological in their choice of candidates to support.

10. Sponsored parties are those whose members get into politics mostly for the fun of it.

11. Over the decades the Democrats and Republicans have been about equally balanced at the national and state levels.

12. The plurality system in the United States encourages the formation of minority parties.

13. The greater ideological commitment of convention delegates compared with average voters is explained by the quota rules for delegate selection.
14. Today, three-fourths of the states have primaries that choose the great majority of convention delegates.

15. Party delegates to national conventions tend to be less ideological than average voters.

16. Interest groups tend to proliferate more in cities such as Chicago, where the political party is strong, than in Los Angeles, where parties are weaker.

17. Only since 1960 have interest groups proliferated rapidly in the United States.

18. The National Independent Retail Jewelers and the League of Women Voters are examples of institutional interest groups.

19. Most people who are sympathetic with the goals of a mass membership interest group do not join it.

20. The American Association of Retired Persons is an example of an interest group that offers material incentives to prospective members.

21. There are no conservative organizations comparable to Ralph Nader’s ideological interest groups.

22. The Ford Foundation has contributed millions of dollars to predominantly conservative interest groups.

23. Direct mail solicitations for interest group funding are as old as the Post Office.

24. The most important resource that a lobbyist can have in influencing government is public support.
25. A legislator would be more likely to support a proposed law if several ideologically similar lobbies all supported it.

26. PACs reached huge proportions only after laws to regulate campaign contributions were enacted.

27. Ideological PACs generally raise more money than business or labor PACs.

28. Most money given by PACs to candidates running for Congress goes to incumbents.

29. Politicians generally are comfortable with situations in which disruptive tactics are pursued by interest groups.

30. The First Amendment never has been a barrier to the effective regulation of interest-group activity.

Multiple Choice. Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. The oldest political parties in the world are currently found in:
   a. India.
   b. the United States.
   c. Great Britain.
   d. Switzerland.

2. In Europe candidates for elective office are generally nominated by:
   a. local referenda.
   b. aristocrats.
   c. party leaders.
   d. national primaries.

3. Decentralization of political authority in the United States is chiefly promoted by:
   a. federalism.
   b. nationalism.
   c. the church.
   d. the mass media.
4. Which of the following is not a reason for stronger political parties in Europe?
   a. the greater age of European parties
   b. the absence of primary elections
   c. the ability of the legislature to choose the chief executive
   d. a political culture more favorable to parties

5. Thomas Jefferson, among other founders of our nation, was adamantly opposed to political parties because:
   a. the Constitution made clear the dangers of partisanship in government.
   b. political parties during the early years of the republic were both strong and centralized.
   c. disputes over policies and elections were not easily separated from disputes over governmental legitimacy.
   d. political parties during the early years of the republic represented clear, homogeneous economic interests.

6. A northerner who opposed the Civil War would most likely have belonged to which party?
   a. Democratic
   b. Republican
   c. Whig
   d. Federalist

7. Compared to the Democratic party during the 1960s and 1970s, the Republican party was:
   a. more factionalized.
   b. better organized.
   c. more loosely organized.
   d. underfinanced.

8. Compared with the Republicans, the Democratic national party structure:
   a. has more participation by volunteer party activists.
   b. has more participation by the party’s office holders.
   c. supplies more financial help to the party’s candidates.
   d. gets more of its money from small individual contributors.

9. The Republicans changed the goal of their national party to the election of candidates while the Democrats sought to make their party:
   a. a type of political consulting firm.
   b. achieve a fairer distribution of power.
   c. a more bureaucratic party.
   d. more powerful than the local ones.

10. At the opposite extreme from the political machine is:
    a. the sponsored party.
    b. a personal following.
    c. the ideological party.
    d. the solidary group.
11. The chief disadvantage of a solidary association is that its members:
   a. are looking for patronage.
   b. hold fanatical opinions.
   c. dislike machines.
   d. may not work hard.

12. Almost all elections in the United States are based on:
   a. the plurality system.
   b. the majority system.
   c. proportional representation.
   d. a combination of systems.

13. That the two-party system has persisted in the United States is perhaps best explained by what two factors?
   a. democracy and the decentralization of power
   b. the strength of political parties and the media
   c. electoral laws and public opinion
   d. religion and the First Amendment

14. Which type of minor party has probably the greatest influence on U.S. public policy?
   a. factional
   b. ideological
   c. economic protest
   d. one issue

15. Party activists are not likely to:
   a. resemble the average citizen.
   b. take issues seriously.
   c. work very hard.
   d. support candidates with strong ideological appeal.

16. The chief disadvantage to parties of the current system of presidential nomination is that it:
   a. increases the chances of nominating a candidate unappealing to the rank and file.
   b. decreases the chances of a faction’s bolting the party.
   c. increases the chances of a faction’s bolting the party.
   d. affords little opportunity to minorities to voice their concerns.

17. The advantage of the new primary system that has developed in America is that it:
   a. increases the role that rank-and-file voters have in influencing the party’s candidate choice.
   b. increases the chances that the party will nominate a candidate who is appealing to the average voter.
   c. increases the opportunity for those with strong policy preferences to play a role in the party.
   d. decreases the likelihood that one party or the other will gain control of the presidency for several terms.
18. How can the differences between the two major parties in America best be characterized?
   a. There are very large differences in policy views.
   b. There are large policy differences among activists and much smaller ones among the rank-and-file.
   c. There are only trivial differences.
   d. There are differences on social issues but not on economic issues.

19. To obtain power within a political party, an individual must usually:
   a. move toward the center.
   b. move away from the center.
   c. avoid publicity.
   d. reflect the views of the average voter.

20. Where political parties are strong, interest groups are likely to be:
   a. equally strong.
   b. independent.
   c. weak.
   d. more numerous.

21. It has been observed that interest groups are created more rapidly in some periods than in others. This suggests that these groups:
   a. are the result of the diversity of American society.
   b. arise when labor is strong.
   c. arise when social conditions demand action.
   d. do not arise inevitably out of natural social processes.

22. The growth of numerous public-interest lobbies in the 1960s was an example of interest groups forming as a result of:
   a. government policy.
   b. the emergence of talented leadership.
   c. the enlargement of governmental responsibilities.
   d. broad economic developments.

23. The American ski industry is represented in Washington by a group that seeks to influence public policy regarding skiing. This group is most accurately called a(n)
   a. membership interest.
   b. solidary group.
   c. institutional interest.
   d. public-interest lobby.

24. Compared with the British and Germans, Americans’ sense of political efficacy—a citizen’s sense that he/she can understand and influence politics—is:
   a. much less.
   b. slightly less.
   c. about the same.
   d. much greater.
25. An organization such as the Sierra Club or Moral Majority can overcome the reluctance of people to join by offering certain incentives. Which of the following is not one of these incentives?
   a. solidary incentives
   b. material incentives
   c. client incentives
   d. a significant purpose

26. Unlike other types of mass-membership organizations, public-interest lobbies principally benefit:
   a. nonmembers.
   b. local chapters.
   c. individual clients.
   d. government employees.

27. Interest groups with large staffs are likely to take political positions in accordance with:
   a. rank-and-file opinion.
   b. the view of the general public.
   c. staff beliefs.
   d. government policy.

28. Which of the following interest groups is likely to have the most difficult time raising money?
   a. a lobbying organization representing a nonprofit organization
   b. a lobbying organization representing a for-profit organization
   c. a membership organization relying on appeals to purpose
   d. a membership organization relying on solidary incentives

29. Of the three major sources of funds available to interest groups, the one that is unique to modern interest groups is:
   a. foundation grants.
   b. federal grants and contracts.
   c. computerized direct-mail solicitations.
   d. public funding via the personal tax return.

30. To say that “the pressure system has an upper-class bias” is to:
   a. state an important principle of lobbying.
   b. state an incorrect view of lobbying.
   c. say much about the people who join groups, but nothing about positions the groups will take.
   d. say much about the positions groups take, but nothing about the people who join these groups.

31. Probably the best measure of an interest group’s ability to influence legislators and bureaucrats is:
   a. the size of the membership.
   b. the dollar amount of its contributions.
   c. supply information.
   d. its contacts.
32. One method used by lobbyists to convince undecided legislators that public opinion on an issue is inclined in one direction is to:
   a. supply them with their most recent ratings.
   b. supply them with technical information.
   c. commission a public opinion poll.
   d. cultivate the goodwill of government officials.

33. The scholarly evidence that PAC money buys votes in Congress is:
   a. sketchy at best.
   b. fairly strong, but still inconclusive.
   c. substantial.
   d. conclusive.

34. Michael Deaver leaving the Reagan White House in 1985 to work for various interests seeking to influence national politics was an example of:
   a. intervendor funding.
   b. the “revolving door.”
   c. double dipping.
   d. the “free rider” problem.

35. The most significant legal constraints on interest groups currently come from:
   a. the 1946 Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act.
   b. the tax code.
   c. antitrust legislation.
   d. the Supreme Court.

36. A strategy increasingly employed by interest groups which builds on grass-roots lobbying is called:
   a. outsider.
   b. insider.
   c. inclusive.
   d. bargain-hunting.

Essay. Practice writing extended answers to the following questions. These test your ability to integrate and express the ideas that you have been studying in this chapter.

1. Why are political parties so weak in the United States? If they are so weak, why do they continue to exist? Would the nation be able to run itself without political parties? What might be some of the outcomes if they just disappeared?

2. The text lists and describes several types of local political party organizations (for example, machines). What are the major types of these organizations? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each type in terms of (a) the degree of political participation they encourage, (b) their ability to give voters a reasonable choice of candidates and policies, and (c) their ability to introduce needed political reforms.

3. To what extent are the delegates who attend Republican and Democratic national conventions representative of average voters? Why should this be so? What reforms have been attempted—and by what party—in an effort to change this situation?
4. List and comment on the various reasons commonly given to explain the unusually large variety of interest groups found in the United States.

5. Explain the difference between organizational and membership-type interest groups and discuss how you might expect their conduct in the political system to vary.

6. Do you believe that the system of interest groups active in American politics today has an upper-class bias? Defend your answer and discuss whether the system as you see it is a desirable or an undesirable one.

III. Applying What You’ve Learned

Political parties mean little to most Americans. Belonging to the Democratic or the Republican party is of no consequence to the average citizen. For this reason, more people are calling themselves independents—members of no party. Have political parties become irrelevant today? The text presents abundant evidence supporting the continued importance of political parties. To be sure, meaningful differences separate the two major parties of the United States. How can the general public be convinced of this?

From the material discussed in the chapter, construct a strategy to get people interested in becoming involved in party politics. At the least, your strategy should address the following concerns:

1. What advantages does active membership in a political party provide? Consider the different types of parties that exist at the local level and the benefits derived by members from each kind of party structure.

2. Should efforts to recruit people be aimed at the national or at the local level? How would a recruitment strategy differ at each level? Explain the reasons for the differences in strategy.
3. Neither major party is representative of its typical voter in selecting candidates for presidential elections. What accounts for this problem? How can it be corrected to entice more people into active party participation? Consider the factors that have weakened parties as well as why this problem is a recent one.

4. How would your strategy differ in attracting members to the Democratic versus the Republican party? What are the strengths and weaknesses of both parties in the way they are organized? How can the weaknesses be corrected without altering the basic character of each party?

IV. Research and Resources

Suggested Readings


**Resources on the World Wide Web**

**Some political parties:**

Democratic National Committee: [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)

Republican National Committee: [www.RNC.org](http://www.RNC.org)

Green party: [www.greens.org](http://www.greens.org)

Libertarian party: [www.lp.org](http://www.lp.org)

Reform party: [www.reformparty.org](http://www.reformparty.org)

**Some interest groups:**

An overview: [www.capweb.net](http://www.capweb.net)
A few specific interest groups:

Conservative:
- American Conservative Union: www.conservative.org
- Christian Coalition: www.cc.org

Liberal:
- American Civil Liberties union: www.aclu.org
- Americans for Democratic Action: www.adaction.org

Environmental:
- Environmental Defense Fund: www.edf.org
- National Resources Defense Council: www.nrdc.org

Civil rights:
- NAACP: www.naacp.org

Feminists:
- National Organization for Women: www.now.org