

Elections 101

Part III



To be robbed and betrayed by a fiendish underground conspiracy or by the earthly agents of Satan is at least a romantic sort of plight.

It suggests at least a grand Hollywood-ready confrontation between good and evil.

But to be coldly ripped off over and over again by a bunch of bloodless, second-rate schmoes, schmoes you *chose*, you *elected*, is not something anyone will take much pleasure in bragging about.

Matt Taibbi



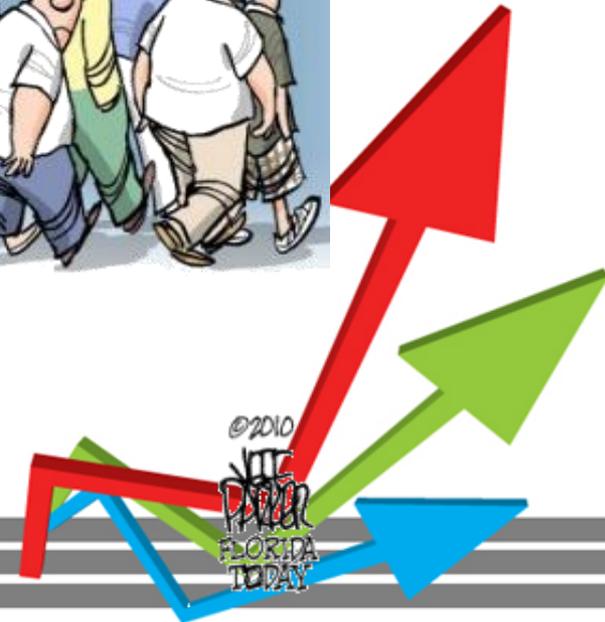
Voting Behavior in Presidential Elections



CAGLEARTOONS.COM

LOOK. THERE GOES
ANOTHER BUNCH OF VOTERS
LEAVING TO REGISTER
AS "INDEPENDENT."

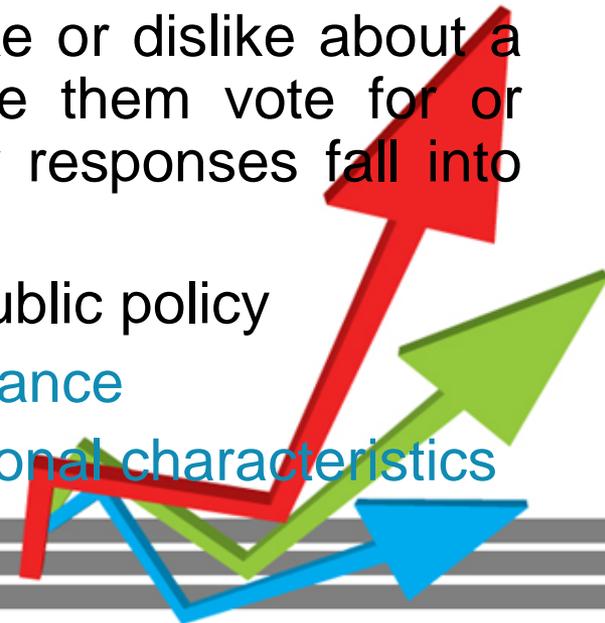
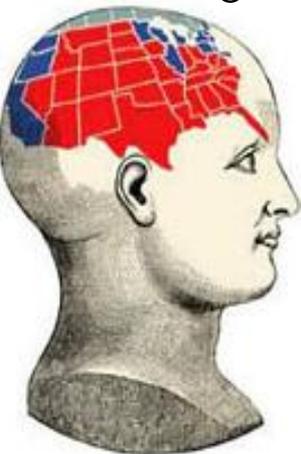
IT'S JUST
SO HARD TO
UNDERSTAND.



Voting Behavior in Presidential Elections



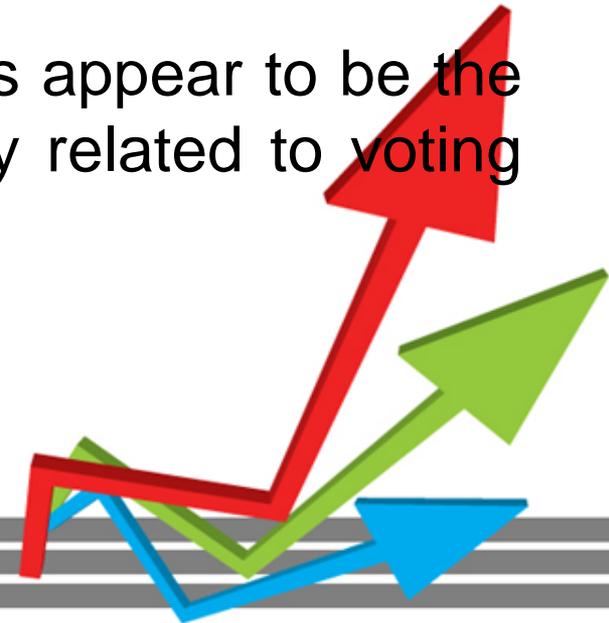
- When Americans decide
 - Most decide how they will vote **before the campaign begins.**
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the electorate reports deciding how to vote before the primaries.
- How Americans decide
 - When voters are asked what they like or dislike about a specific candidate, what might make them vote for or against that candidate, most of their responses fall into one of 3 categories.
 - orientation on **specific issues** of public policy
 - evaluation of **government performance**
 - evaluation of the **candidates' personal characteristics**



Voting Behavior in Presidential Elections



- These categories in turn are influenced by **party identification** (a person's subjective feeling of affiliation with a party) and general **ideological orientation**.
- A number of **social factors** are related to individual voting behavior.
- Race, religion, region and social class appear to be the characteristics that have most closely related to voting over the past several decades.



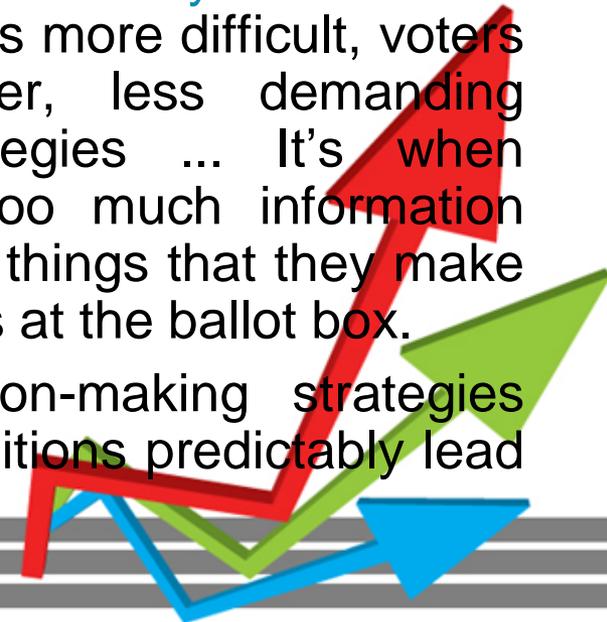
Voting Behavior in Presidential Elections



- On average, about 28% of voters cast their ballot for **the wrong candidate** (*by the voter's own standards*) in presidential elections.
- The campaign with the most money consistently has the largest share of incorrect votes.



- The older voters are, the less information they consider.
- **increased task difficulty**: as the task of deciding gets more difficult, voters shift to easier, less demanding decision strategies ... It's when voters have too much information and over-think things that they make the most errors at the ballot box.
- Certain decision-making strategies in certain conditions predictably lead voters astray.

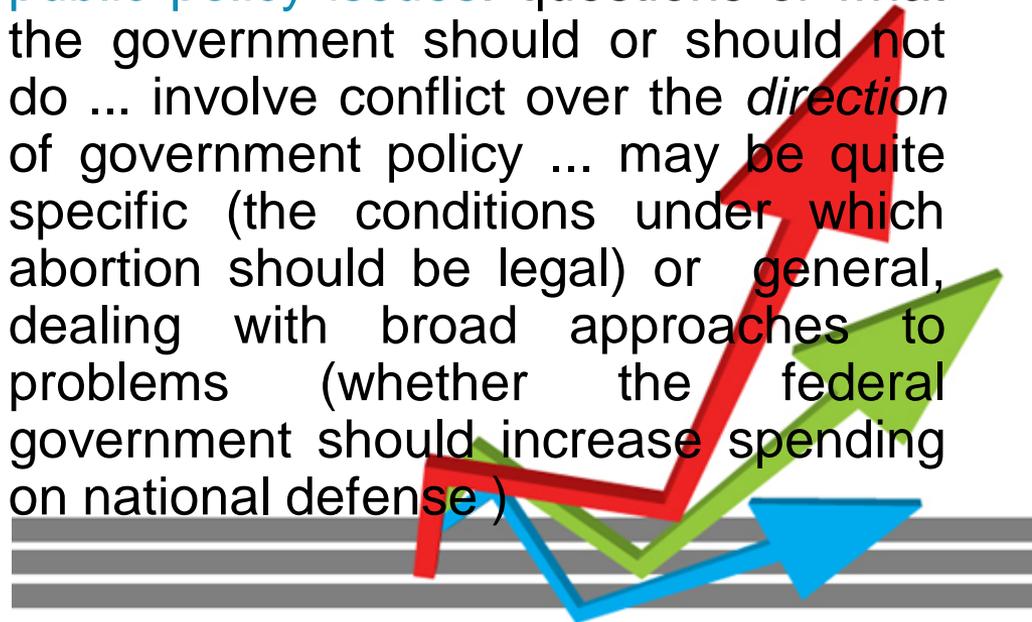




Specific Issues of Public Policy

- We assume the electorate will shape public policy by selecting candidates on the basis of their policy stands.
 - complaints that the candidates fail to clearly address the real issues
 - complaints that the mass media fail to adequately treat issues in their coverage

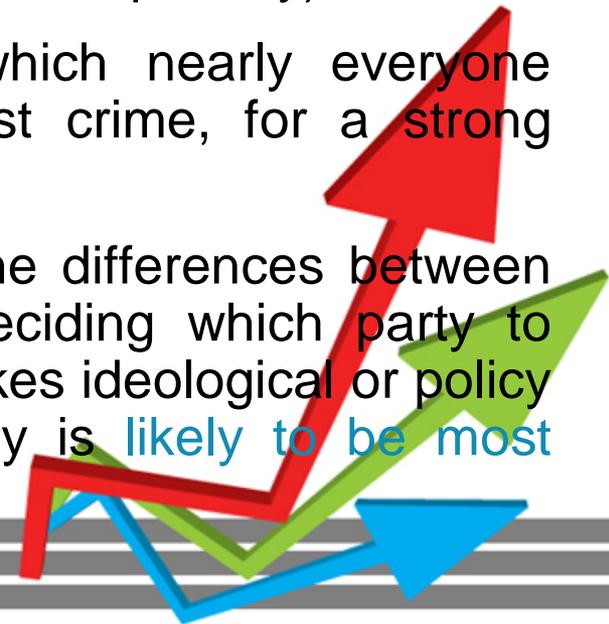
- **public policy issues:** questions of what the government should or should not do ... involve conflict over the *direction* of government policy ... may be quite specific (the conditions under which abortion should be legal) or general, dealing with broad approaches to problems (whether the federal government should increase spending on national defense)





Specific Issues of Public Policy

- For a public policy issue to affect voters' decisions, voters must:
 - have **opinions** on the issue
 - perceive **differences** between the candidates on the issue
- impact of voters' issue opinions on their choice of party:
 - **position issues**: those on which people take positions (for or against abortion or the death penalty)
 - **valence issues**: those on which nearly everyone takes the same side (against crime, for a strong economy)
- When politics is about valence issues, the differences between parties is relatively small. For voters deciding which party to support, the question is not which party takes ideological or policy positions that they share but which party is **likely to be most competent at achieving the goals**.





Specific Issues of Public Policy

- Most presidential elections don't provide the winner with a clear **mandate** to pursue a specific public policy direction.
- The US constitutional system was designed to make the adoption of **radical departures in policy** difficult.
- The democratic process is based on an **informed citizenry** but polls reveal an alarming lack of public knowledge about the American political system.
 - 79% can name the three stooges but only 42% can name the three branches of government.
 - Only 25% can name their two US Senators.
 - Less than 50% know that the first 10 amendments to the US Constitution are called the Bill of Rights.





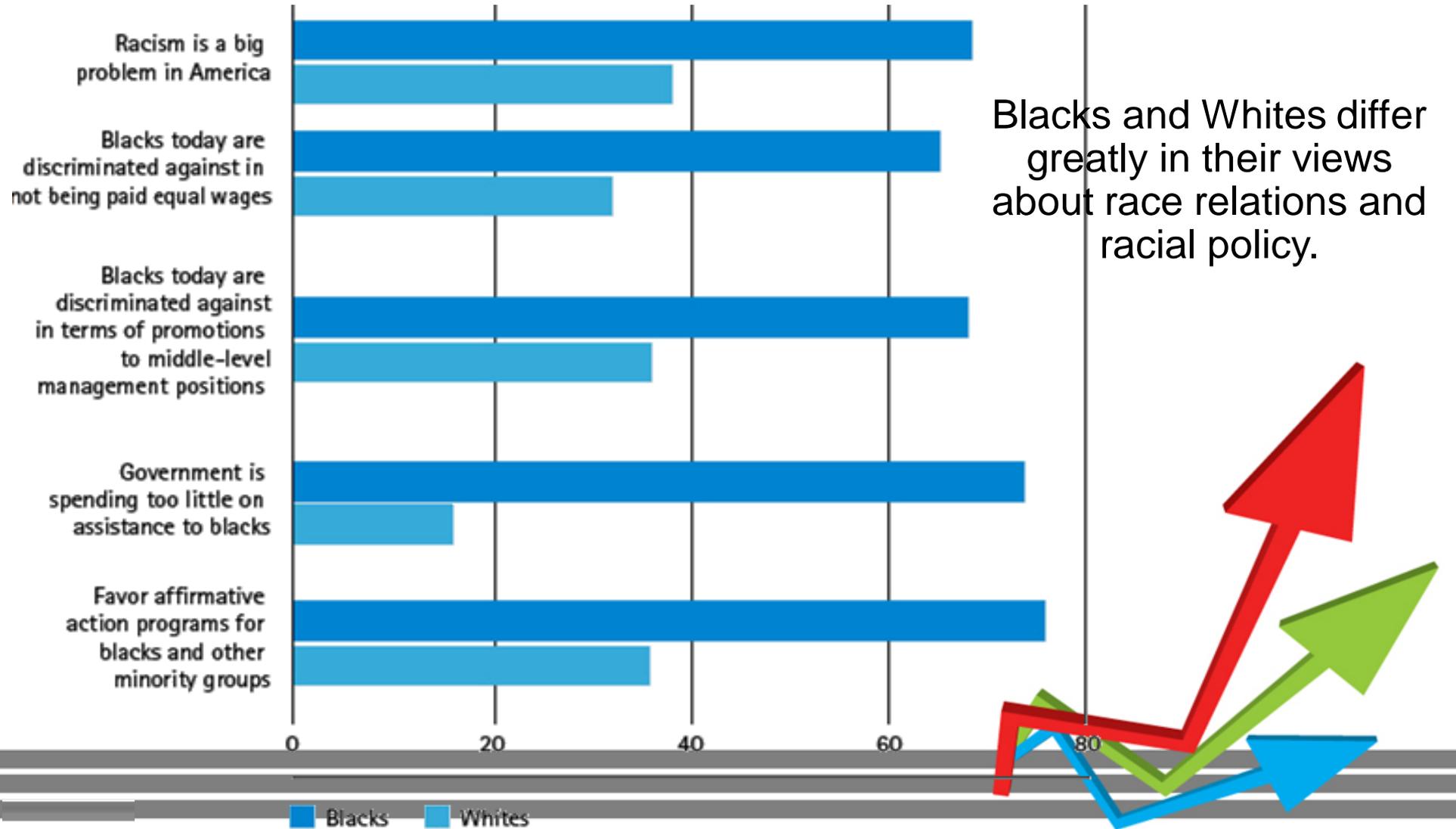
Specific Issues of Public Policy

% of voters saying Trump's first issue priority should be...

| | All voters | Trump voters | Clinton voters |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Health care/Obamacare | 20 | 29 | 12 |
| Economy | 12 | 15 | 9 |
| Immigration/Secure border | 10 | 15 | 6 |
| Unify the country | 8 | 5 | 12 |
| Jobs/Unemployment | 8 | 10 | 7 |
| Change personal behavior/ Address divisions he has created | 6 | 1 | 11 |
| Defense/National security | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Environmental issues/ Climate change | 3 | * | 6 |
| Foreign policy | 3 | 1 | 4 |



Specific Issues of Public Policy

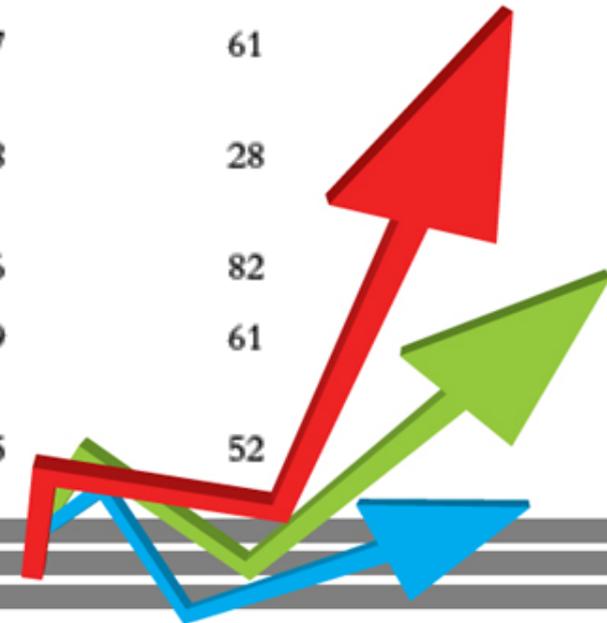




Specific Issues of Public Policy

| | Women | Men |
|---|-------|-----|
| Role of Government | | |
| Consider self conservative | 29% | 43% |
| Government should provide fewer services | 30 | 45 |
| Poverty and homelessness are among the country's most important problems | 63 | 44 |
| Government should guarantee medical care for all | 6 | 58 |
| Favor affirmative action programs for blacks and other minority groups | 53 | 41 |
| Force/Violence | | |
| American bombers should attack all military targets in Iraq, including those in heavily populated areas | 37 | 61 |
| Handguns should be illegal except for use by police and other authorized persons | 48 | 28 |
| Favor death penalty | 76 | 82 |
| Approve of caning the teenager in Singapore who committed acts of vandalism | 39 | 61 |
| Approve of the way the Justice Department took Elian Gonzalez from his Miami relatives | 35 | 52 |

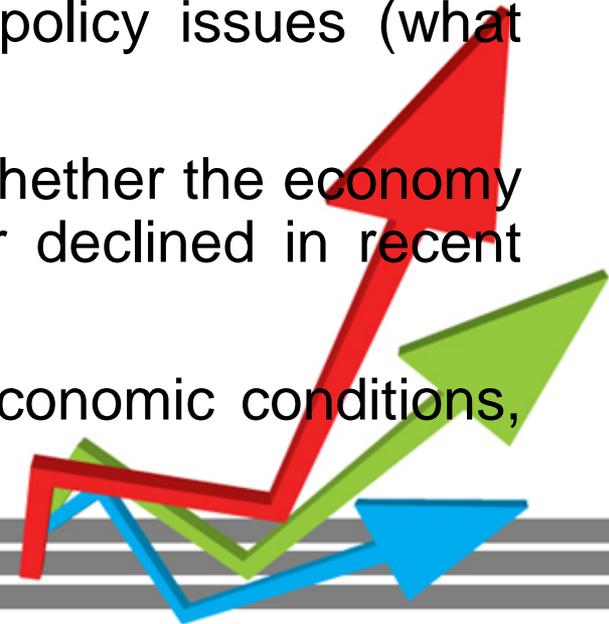
Women's and men's attitudes differ.





Government Performance

- A presidential election is partly a referendum on the performance of the incumbent administration, even when the incumbent president isn't running for reelection.
- Retrospective evaluation based on past government performance (what government did and how well) is an important determinant of voting behavior, and should be distinguished from the influence of policy issues (what the government *should* do).
- Voters have general perceptions of whether the economy or national security has improved or declined in recent years.
- Voters assess national conditions (economic conditions, foreign affairs, national security).





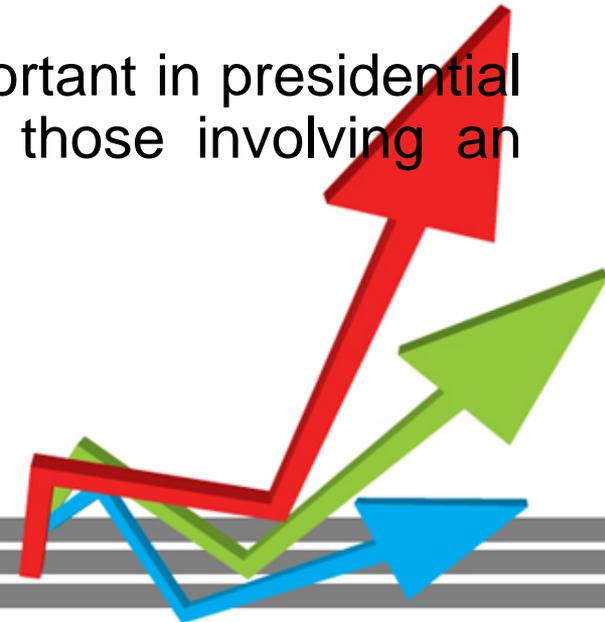
Government Performance

- Voters **evaluate government performance** in dealing with the conditions, whether or not government (and who in specific) is to blame/praise.
- Voters may react primarily to their own situation or may evaluate the performance of an administration apart from their own circumstances.



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- The **economy** is important in presidential elections, especially those involving an incumbent president.





Government Performance

- In order to correctly evaluate government performance, voters need a certain level of knowledge and understanding of **how government works and the issues involved**.
- Voters are reasonably **confident** in their own understanding of government,
- However, on very general knowledge tests, voters not only **lack accurate understanding** but have actual **misinformation**, even the most educated voters.



Cartoon Courtesy Ed Gamble / Florida Times-Union

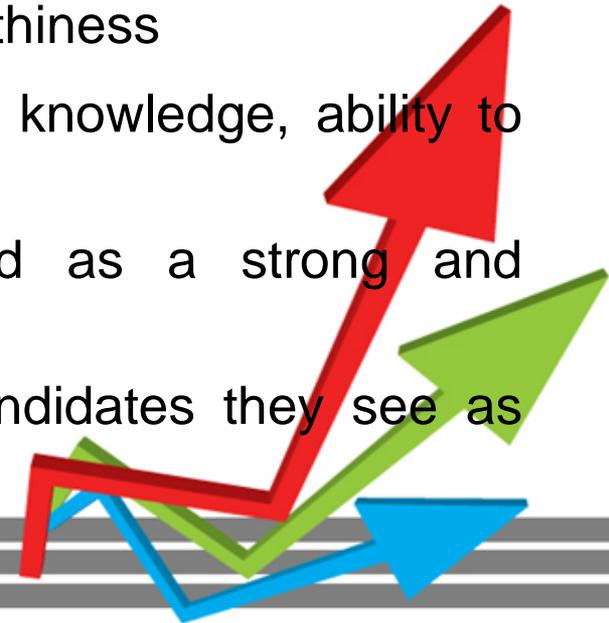
○ Too, Washington has become very adept at obscuring policy and performance.





Candidates' Personal Characteristics

- ...personal characteristics of the candidate such as experience, honesty, morality, compassion, competence, leadership ability, etc
- Voters form images of the personal qualities and abilities of candidates that are important influences on the vote.
- The four dimensions of personal traits may vary in their importance and effect in any given election.
 - **integrity dimension:** honesty and trustworthiness
 - **competence dimension:** experience and knowledge, ability to handle the job
 - **leadership ability dimension:** perceived as a strong and inspiring leader
 - **compassion dimension:** voters favor candidates they see as concerned and caring





Candidates' Personal Characteristics

- Analyses of recent presidential elections have focused on the significance of candidate characteristics such as:
 - honesty (1976)
 - competence (1980)
 - leadership (1984)
 - patriotism (1988)
 - trustworthiness (1992 and 1996)
 - integrity and leadership ability (2000)
 - trustworthiness and leadership ability (2004)

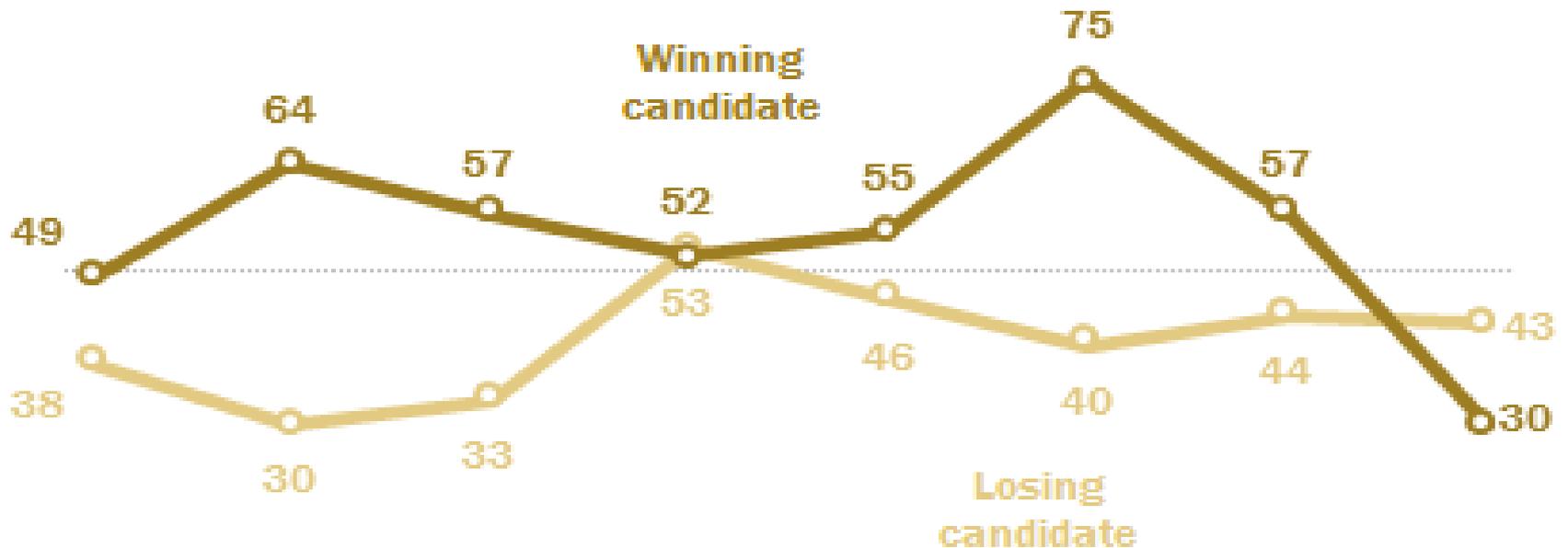
I WISH INSTEAD OF
TAKING CREDIT FOR
THINGS HE **DIDN'T** DO,
LIKE CREATE 5,000 SPRINT JOBS,
TRUMP WOULD TAKE CREDIT FOR
THINGS HE ACTUALLY **DID**,
LIKE ASSAULT WOMEN.





Candidates' Personal Characteristics

% of voters who give each candidate a grade of "A" or "B" for the way they conducted themselves over the course of the campaign

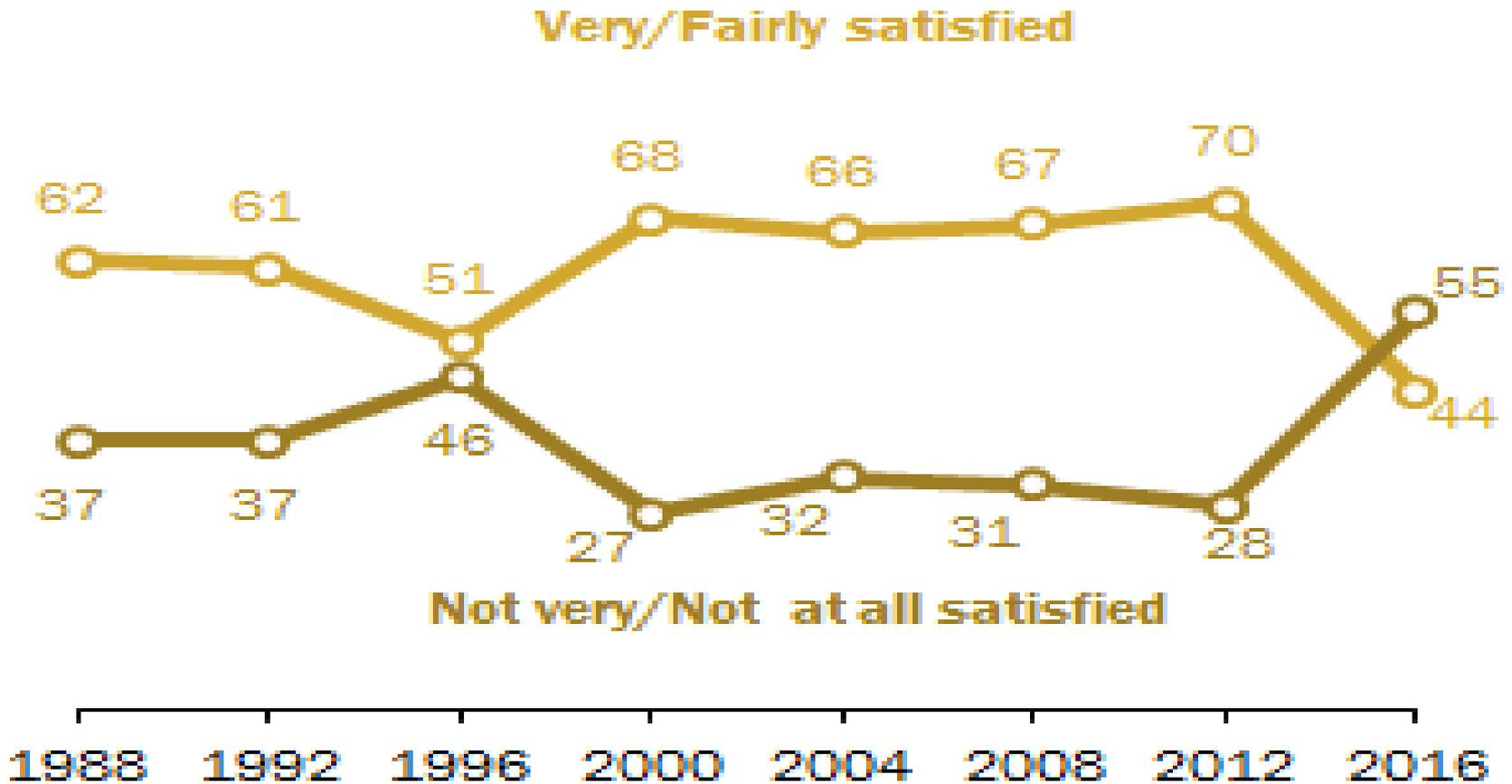


| 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000* | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | 2016 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Bush Dukakis | Bush Clinton | Dole Clinton | Bush Gore | Bush Kerry | McCain Obama | Romney Obama | Trump Clinton |



Candidates' Personal Characteristics

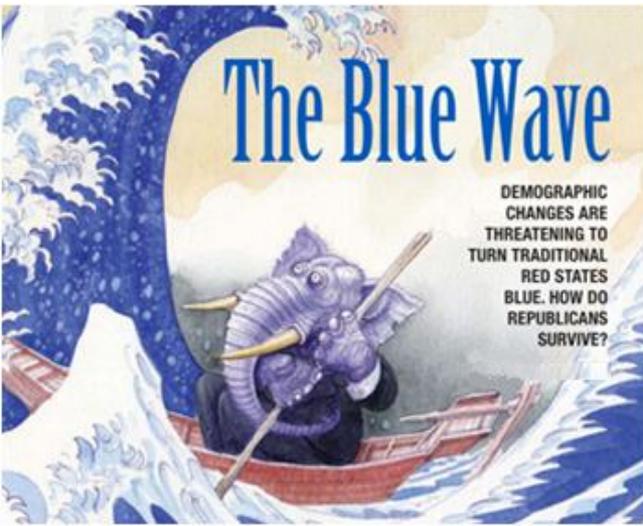
% of voters who say they were ___ with the choice of presidential candidates



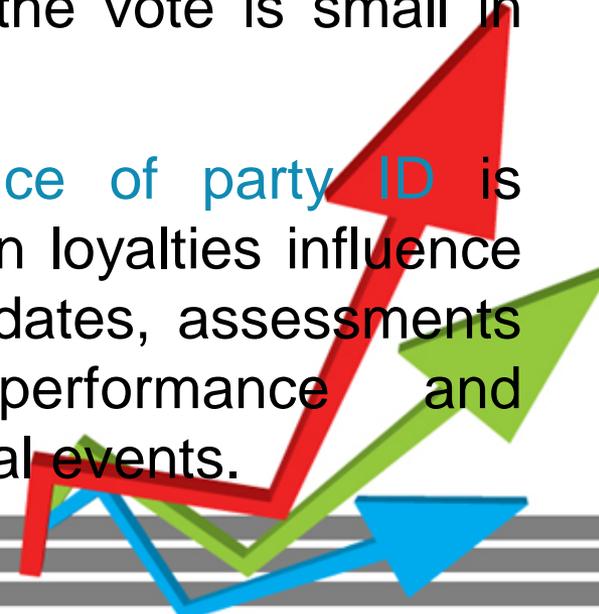


Party Identification and Ideology

- Party identification and ideology are more general, **long-run** factors that influence the attitudes immediate to the voter's decision in a particular year.
- Most voters identify with one of the two major political parties, and these basic partisan loyalties influence the vote.
 - The **direct influence of party ID** on the vote is small in presidential elections.



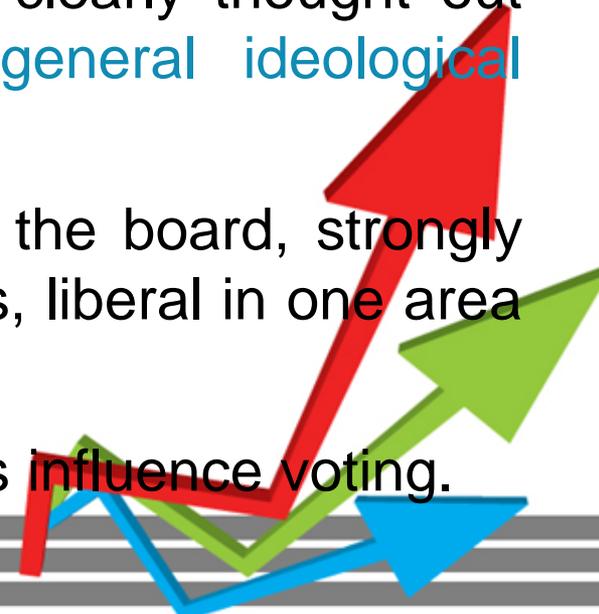
- The **indirect influence of party ID** is great, in that partisan loyalties influence evaluations of candidates, assessments of government performance and perceptions of political events.





Party Identification and Ideology

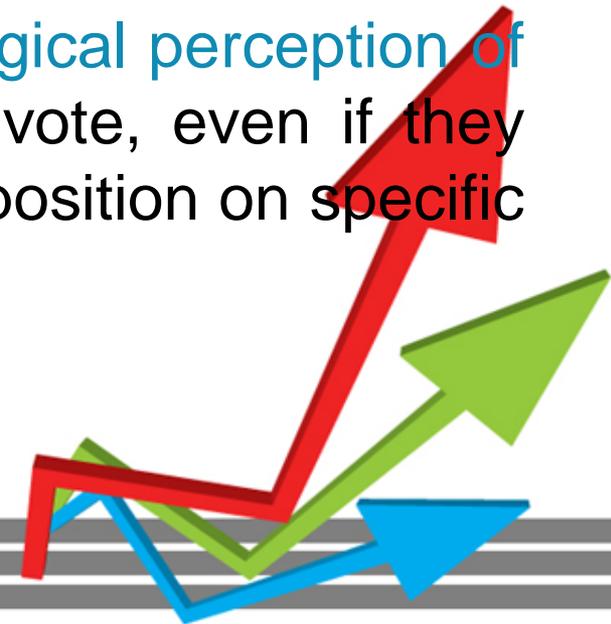
- Party ID is a **filter** through which voters view the political world.
- Party ID may be somewhat less important now than in the past, but it is still a very significant factor in explaining political orientations and behavior.
- Most voters lack a well-articulated and clearly thought out political ideology but they do have **general ideological tendencies or predispositions**.
- They may be strongly liberal across the board, strongly conservative, moderate in most areas, liberal in one area but conservative in another, etc.
- These general ideological orientations influence voting.





Party Identification and Ideology

- **Ideology** affects positions on specific issues. For example, voters who are strong conservatives are likely to take conservative positions on new issues as they arise.
- Ideology also may influence party identification.
- Voters may have a **general ideological perception of a candidate** that influences their vote, even if they are unsure about the candidate's position on specific policy issues.



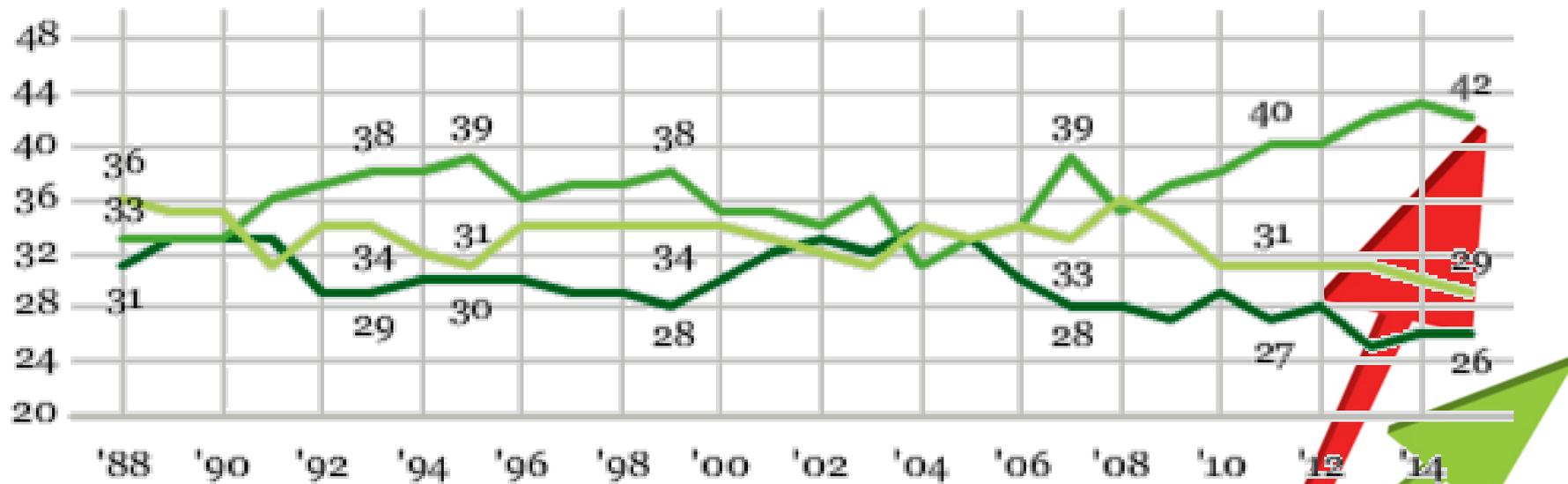


Party Identification and Ideology

The Democratic advantage in party identification has eroded.

U.S. Party Identification, Yearly Averages, 1988-2015

■ % Republican ■ % Independent ■ % Democrat



Based on multiple day polls conducted by telephone



Party Identification and Ideology

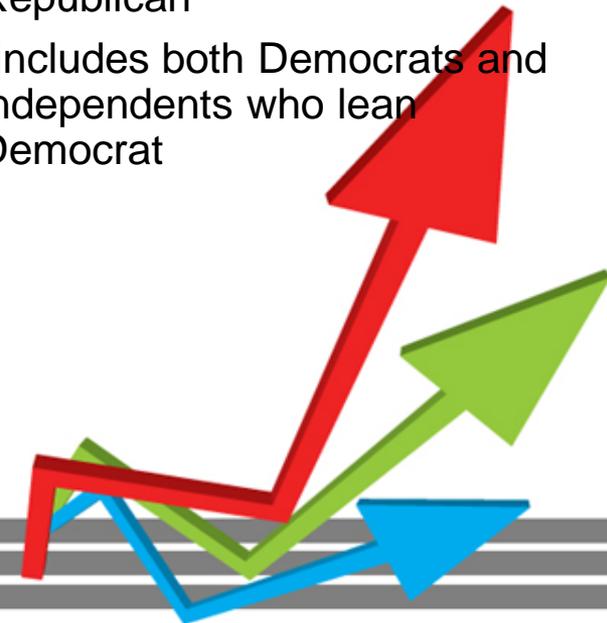


| | Independent% | Rep/Lean Rep% ¹ | Dem/Lean Dem% ² |
|---|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| TOTAL | 39 | 39 | 48 |
| GENDER | | | |
| Men | 45 | 43 | 44 |
| Women | 35 | 36 | 52 |
| RACE/ETHNICITY | | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 40 | 49 | 40 |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 26 | 11 | 80 |
| Hispanic | 44 | 26 | 56 |
| Asian, non-Hispanic (English-speaking only) | 46 | 23 | 65 |
| GENERATION (ages in 2014) | | | |
| Millennial (18-33) | 48 | 35 | 51 |
| Generation X (34-49) | 40 | 38 | 49 |
| Baby-Boomer (50-68) | 35 | 41 | 47 |
| Silent (69-86) | 29 | 47 | 43 |
| EDUCATION | | | |
| College graduate+ | 39 | 40 | 52 |
| Post graduate degree | 38 | 35 | 57 |
| College graduate | 39 | 42 | 49 |
| Some college or less | 40 | 39 | 47 |
| Some college | 40 | 42 | 47 |
| High school or less | 40 | 37 | 47 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | | |
| Married | 39 | 48 | 41 |
| Unmarried | 43 | 32 | 54 |

Groups differ in their identification with the parties.

¹includes both Republicans and independents who lean Republican

²includes both Democrats and independents who lean Democrat



Party Identification and Ideology

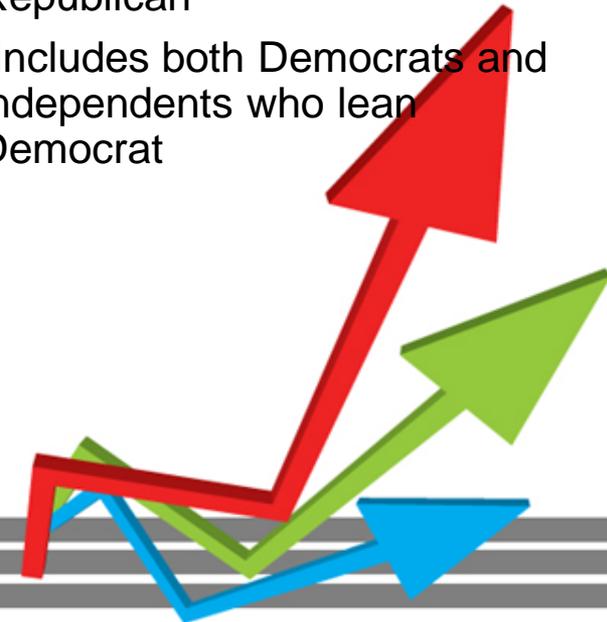


| | Independent% | Rep/Lean Rep% ¹ | Dem/Lean Dem% ² |
|---|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| TOTAL | 39 | 39 | 48 |
| FAMILY INCOME | | | |
| \$75,000+ | 38 | 48 | 45 |
| \$30,000-\$74,999 | 40 | 41 | 48 |
| <\$30,000 | 42 | 31 | 54 |
| EMPLOYED | | | |
| Yes | 40 | 39 | 48 |
| Full-time | 41 | 39 | 47 |
| Part-time | 39 | 37 | 49 |
| No | 34 | 36 | 49 |
| COMMUNITY TYPE | | | |
| Urban | 39 | 31 | 57 |
| Suburban | 40 | 43 | 45 |
| Rural | 39 | 47 | 39 |
| RELIGIOUS TRADITION | | | |
| White Non-Hispanic Evangelical Protestant | 34 | 68 | 22 |
| White Non-Hispanic Mainline Protestant | 38 | 48 | 40 |
| Black Protestant | 22 | 10 | 82 |
| Catholic | 37 | 40 | 48 |
| Mormon | 35 | 70 | 22 |
| Jewish | 33 | 31 | 61 |
| Unaffiliated | 50 | 25 | 61 |

Groups differ in their identification with the parties.

¹includes both Republicans and independents who lean Republican

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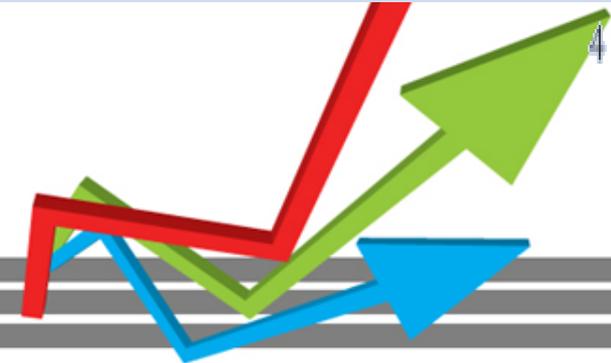




Party Identification and Ideology

top positive and negative things associated with the Republican party

| | % | | % |
|--|----|--|----|
| Better fiscal management/Budget cuts/Less debt | 11 | Inflexible/Unwilling to compromise | 21 |
| Conservative views | 10 | For the rich/Protecting the wealthy not the middle class | 12 |
| Favor smaller government | 5 | Don't stand up for their positions/Give in too easily | 9 |
| For the people | 4 | Inconsistent/Dishonest/Say one thing and do another | 5 |
| Morals/Ethics/Religion | 4 | Choice of candidates/party leaders | 4 |
| Gun policies | 4 | Positions on social issues | 4 |

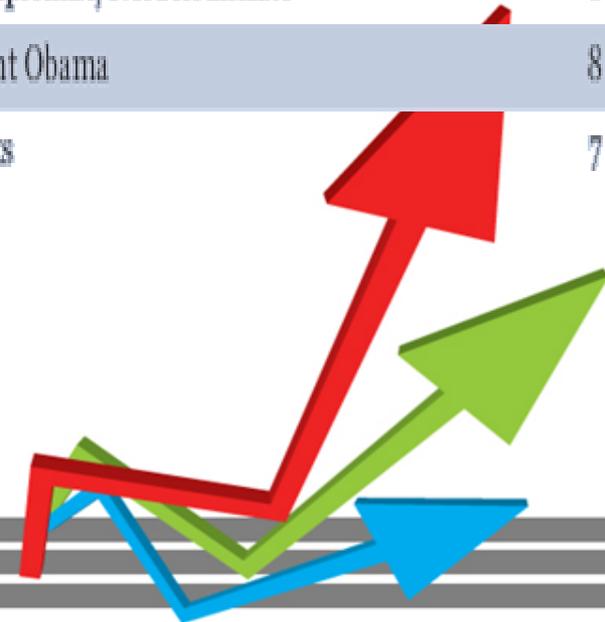




Party Identification and Ideology

top positive and negative things associated with the Democratic party

| | % | | % |
|--|----|--|----|
| Care about middle/working class | 14 | Spend too much/Increase the budget deficit | 14 |
| Social programs | 5 | Inflexible/Unwilling to compromise/Not accountable | 8 |
| Inclusive/Accepting of diversity | 5 | Lack of leadership/President Obama | 8 |
| Flexible/Open-minded/Willing to compromise | 5 | Too focused on entitlements | 7 |
| Like President Obama/the Democrats | 3 | | |
| Abortion policies/Pro-choice | 3 | | |



Voting Behavior in Presidential Elections



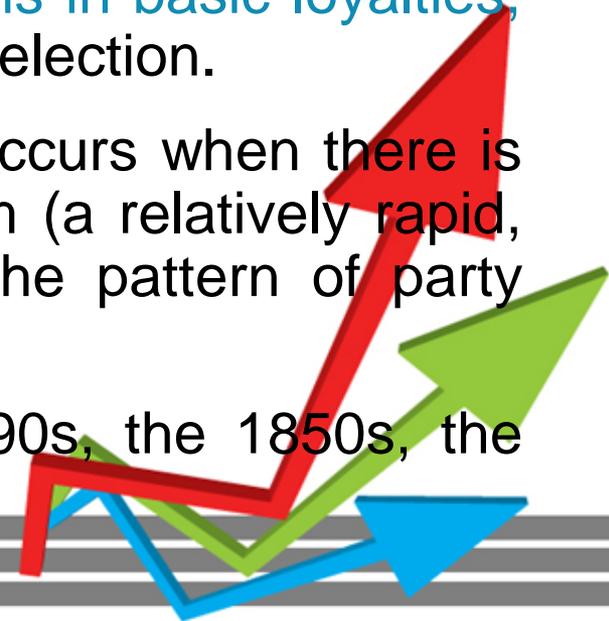
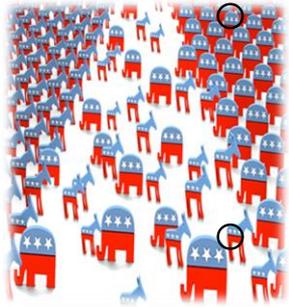
- Factors that influence voters' decisions vary in their stability over time.
 - Evaluations of candidates' personal characteristics and government performance are short-term, capable of substantial shifts from one election to the next.
 - Party ID and ideology are much more stable in the short term. Not many voters change their party ID or ideology from one election to the next, and changes that do occur are fairly small ones.
 - Specific issues of public policy fall somewhere in between. While the issues crucial in presidential elections and how voters evaluate the candidates on those issues can change dramatically, many basic policy issues stretch across several elections, with partisan differences remaining relatively constant.





Patterns of Presidential Elections

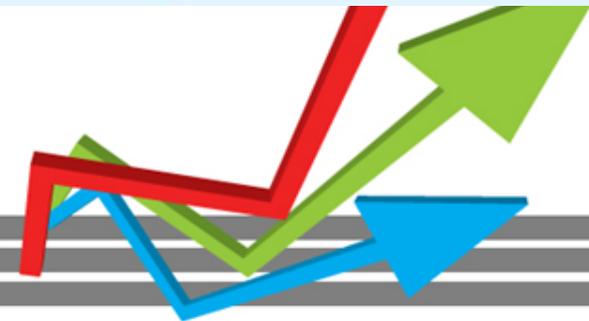
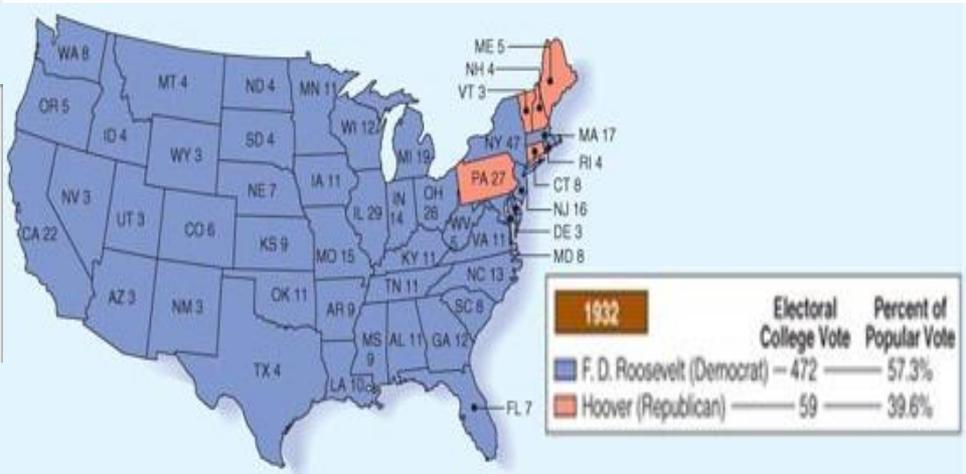
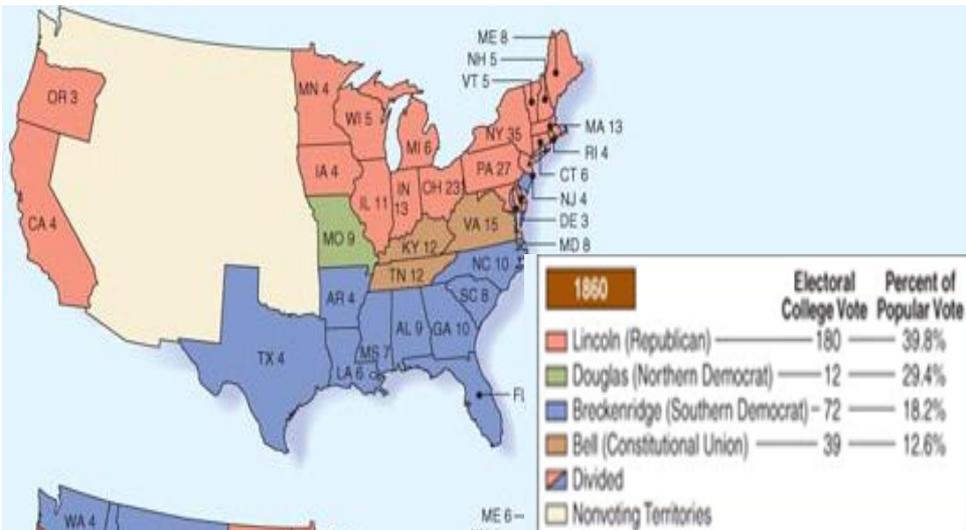
- Election results often change dramatically.
- **party realignment**: shifting of party coalition groupings in the electorate that remain in place for several elections
- Short-run changes are the result of fluctuations in **factors that are specific to an election**, such as the candidates or the condition of the economy.
- Long-term shifts result from **alterations in basic loyalties**, changes that last beyond a particular election.
- The most significant long-term change occurs when there is a **critical realignment** of the party system (a relatively rapid, fundamental and durable alteration in the pattern of party loyalties held by the electorate).
- realignments occur **infrequently**: the 1890s, the 1850s, the 1930s (New Deal realignment)





Patterns of Presidential Elections

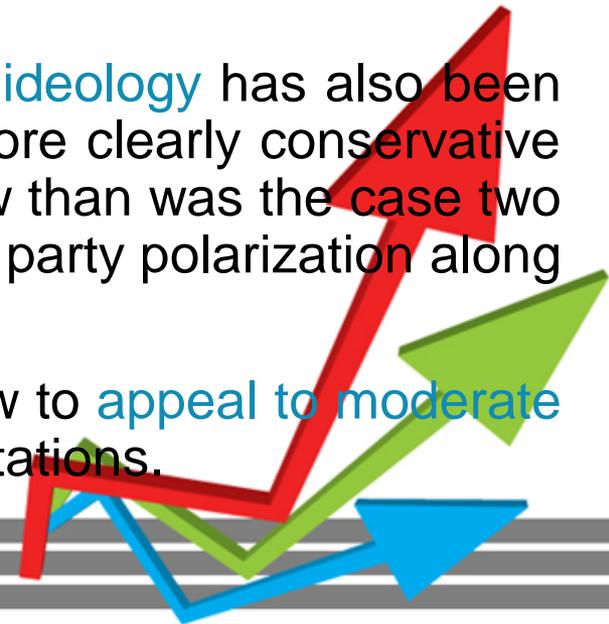
Electoral College results for three realigning presidential contests





Patterns of Presidential Elections

- In any time period there is change in party loyalties but only rarely is it substantial enough to qualify as a critical realignment.
- While there has been a great deal of change in recent decades, it has not added up to a critical realignment, although the cumulative change over the past three decades has been substantial.
 - Analyses of recent change has focused on changes among **different social groups**.
 - The connection between **partisanship and ideology** has also been a major factor. The Republican Party is more clearly conservative and the Democrats more clearly liberal now than was the case two or three decades ago. The result is greater party polarization along ideological lines.
 - A major problem of the parties today is how to **appeal to moderate voters** despite the parties' ideological orientations.



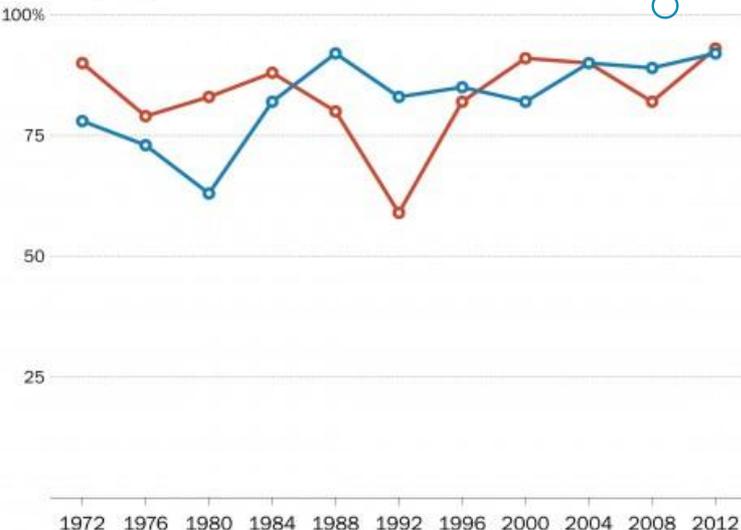


Patterns of Presidential Elections

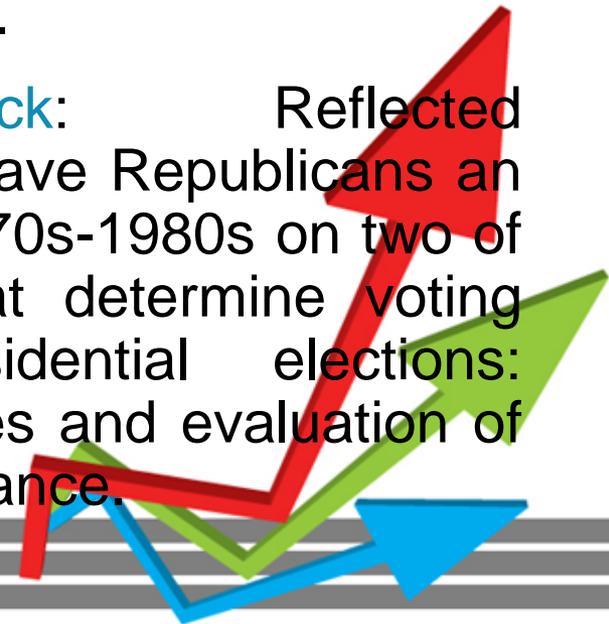
- The Democratically-dominated New Deal system splintered in the 1960s.
- Racial and social turmoil and Vietnam forced President Johnson (Dem) to withdraw from the race in 1968.
- Richard Nixon (Rep) won two terms (1968, 1972) initiating a streak of Republican presidential winners.

Party loyalty in presidential elections

Data from exit polling.



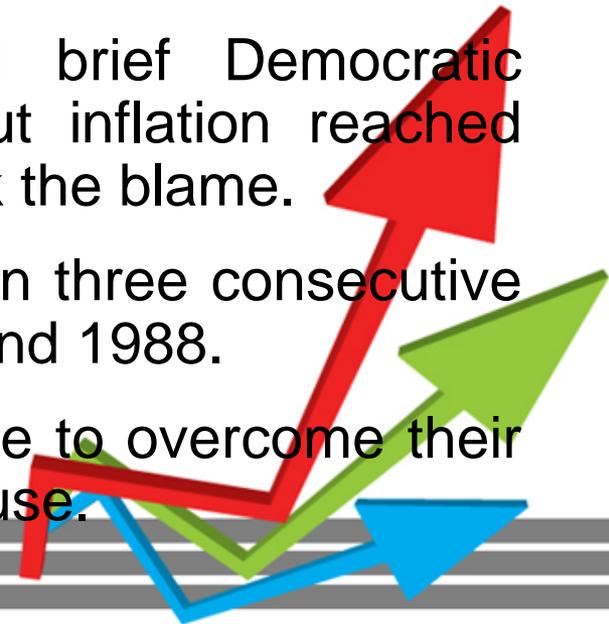
○ **Republican lock:** Reflected developments that gave Republicans an advantage in the 1970s-1980s on two of the four factors that determine voting behavior in presidential elections: orientations on issues and evaluation of government performance.





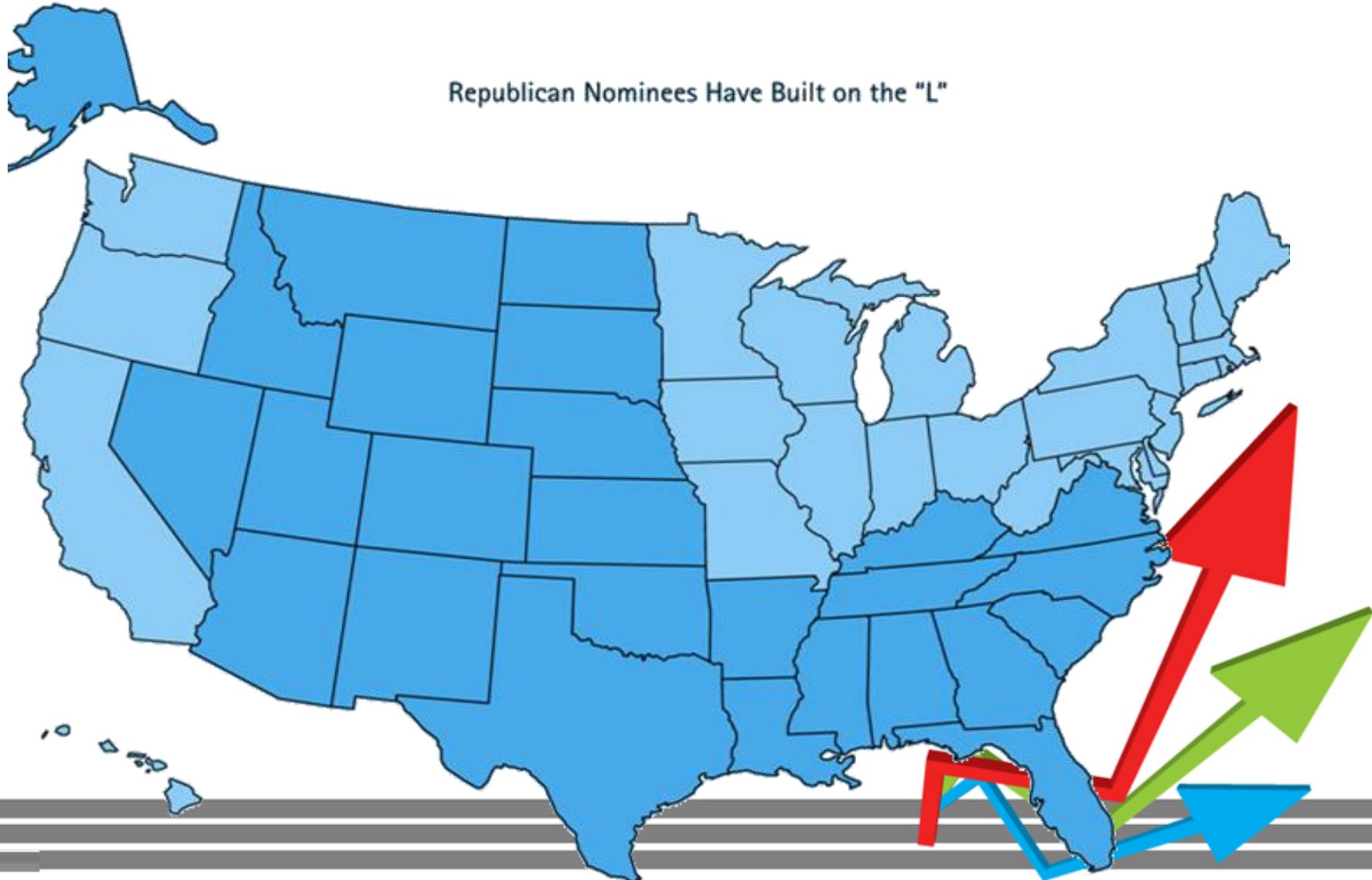
Patterns of Presidential Elections

- Republican lock:
 - forced Democrats to defend unpopular policies and eroded their longstanding advantage in party ID
 - Democrats went from the party of prosperity to the party that was associated with being weak on defense and too liberal for the country's general population.
 - Carter (Dem) victory: represented brief Democratic recovery (1976) after Watergate but inflation reached frightening levels and Democrats took the blame.
 - Reagan/GHW Bush: Republicans won three consecutive presidential elections ... 1980, 1984 and 1988.
- Not until the 1990s, were Democrats able to overcome their electoral problems and win the White House.





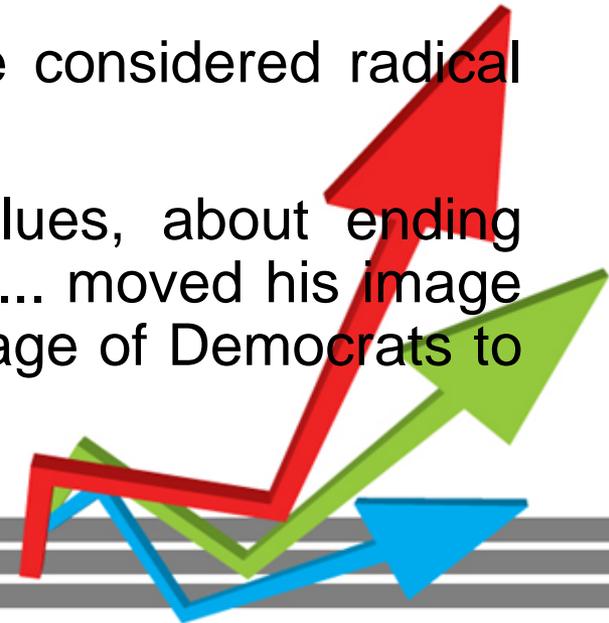
Patterns of Presidential Elections





Patterns of Presidential Elections

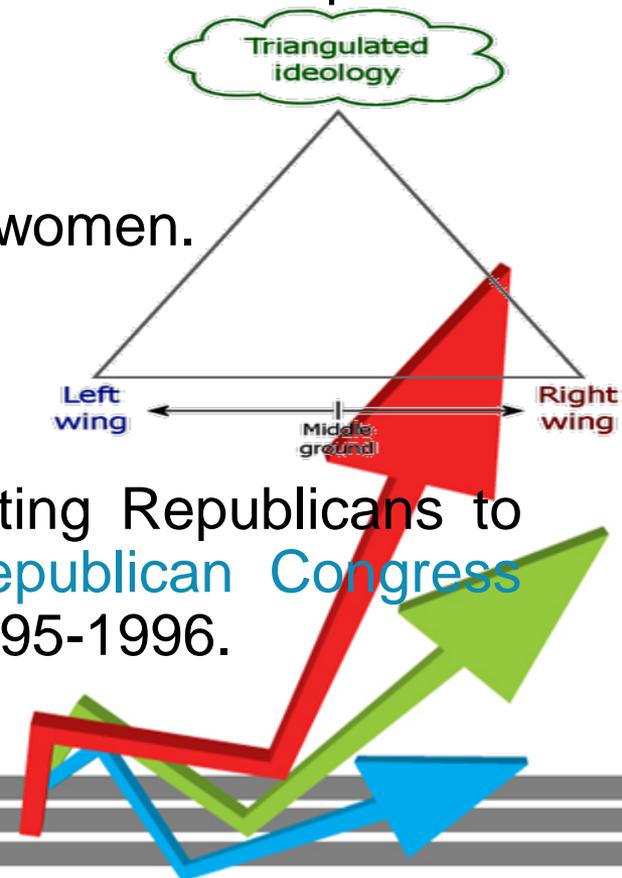
- Democratic party revival (1992): Clinton (Dem) won the presidency.
 - Recession rejuvenated the Democrats' image as the *party of prosperity*.
 - Cold War ended and few foreign threats distracted voters from the economy.
 - Clinton distanced himself from those considered radical leaders.
 - Prayed and talked about family values, about ending welfare, allowing capital punishment ... moved his image from the traditional cultural-liberal image of Democrats to a more conservative image.



Patterns of Presidential Elections



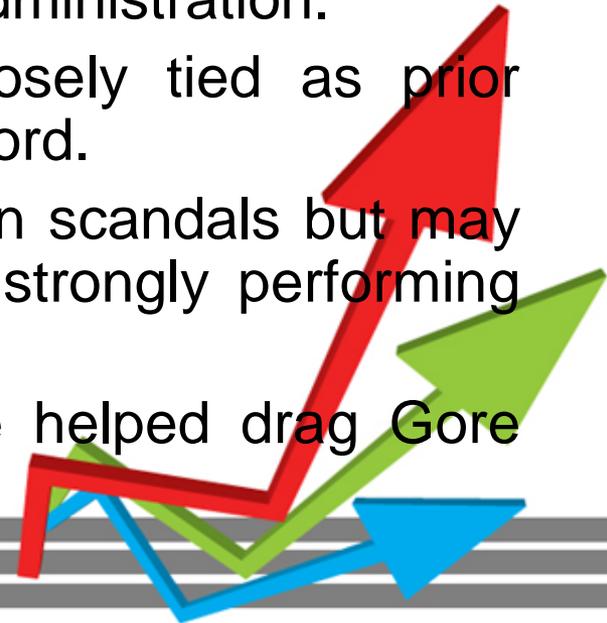
- **triangulation strategy**: strategy in which a political candidate presents their ideology as being above or between the left and right sides or wings of a traditional democratic political spectrum
- **Gender gap** helped Clinton.
 - Republican policies divided men and women.
 - punitive on welfare policy
 - association with the religious right
- Republicans focused resources on electing Republicans to Congress to “check” the executive. **Republican Congress** shut down government in the winter of 1995-1996.





Patterns of Presidential Elections

- 2000 election: Given the long-standing importance of government performance to voters, most political experts thought Gore (Dem) would win.
- Gore did **win the popular vote** but he **lost the Electoral College** to GW Bush (Rep).
 - Some argue Gore's campaign did not emphasize the peace and prosperity of the Clinton administration.
 - The vote for Gore was not as closely tied as prior candidates to the administration's record.
 - He distanced himself from the Clinton scandals but may have lost the positive benefits of a strongly performing administration.
 - Clinton's personal ratings may have helped drag Gore down as well.

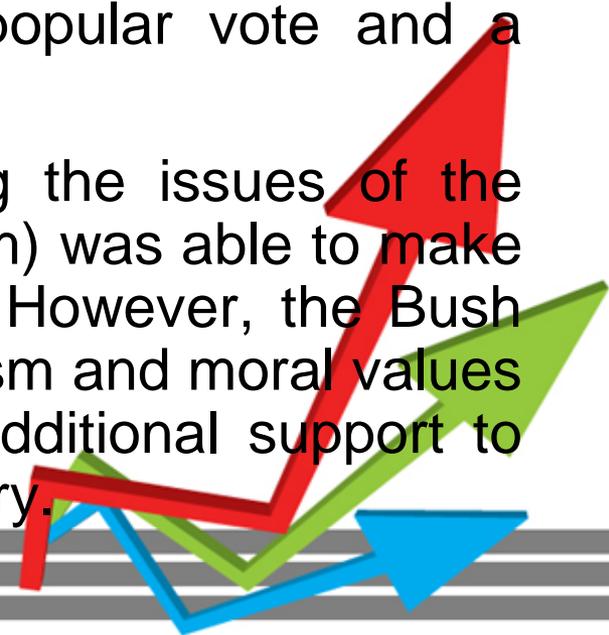
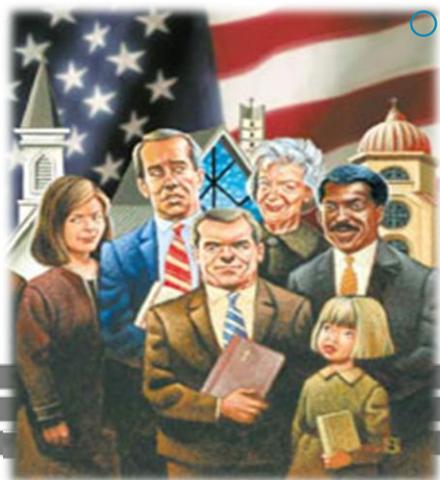




Patterns of Presidential Elections

- The 2004 Showdown
 - most **costly** campaign in history
 - Voters turned out in **large numbers**.
 - Republicans controlled the Presidency, the House and increased their margin in the Senate.
 - GW Bush won a majority of the popular vote and a majority of the electoral vote.

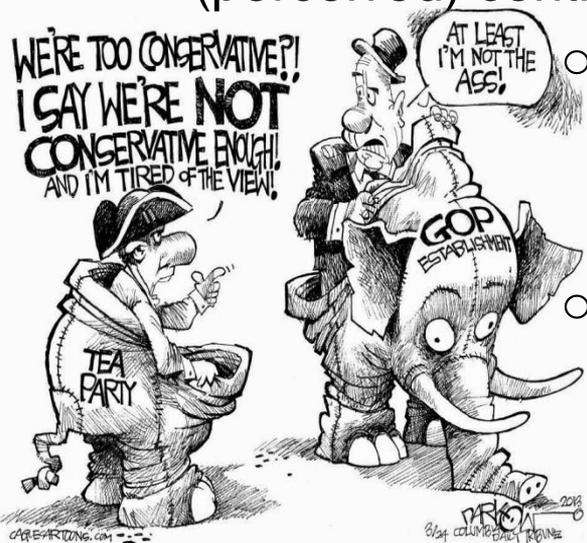
- **Moral values election?** Using the issues of the economy and Iraq, Kerry (Dem) was able to make inroads among many voters. However, the Bush strategy of focusing on terrorism and moral values was effective in picking up additional support to help offset gains made by Kerry.





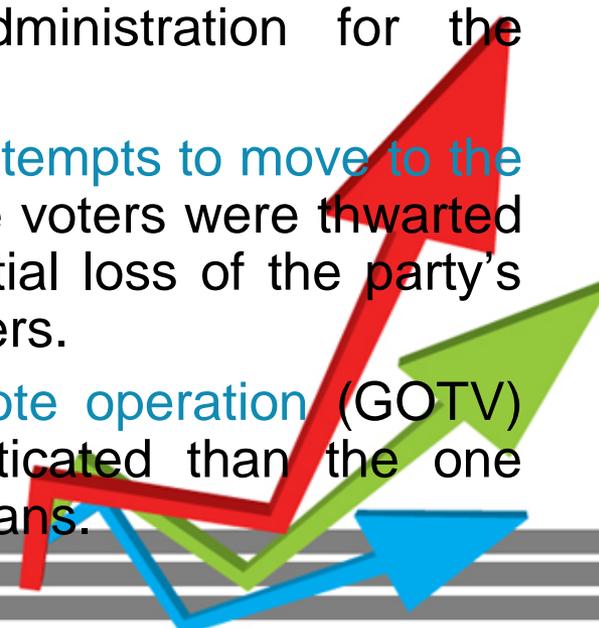
Patterns of Presidential Elections

- 2008 and 2012 elections: disgruntled nation, deeply disenchanted with Republicanism
- hyper-partisan environment in Washington politics
- Republicans lost embarrassingly among young people, African-Americans and Hispanics, fast-growing segments of the population.
- Democrats fielded a younger opponent (Obama) and a message of change.
- Majority blamed Bush's policies and administration for the (perceived) continually poor economy.



Republican candidates' attempts to move to the center to attract moderate voters were thwarted by the threats and potential loss of the party's most conservative members.

Democrats' get-out-the-vote operation (GOTV) was vastly more sophisticated than the one being run by the Republicans.





Patterns of Presidential Elections

Centrist/Moderate policies usually win

Many voters have moved to middle

a dealignment of Party Identification (party members are not loyal)

*Reagan era shift to the **right**,*

*Clinton era shift to the **left**,*

*then to the **middle** . . .*

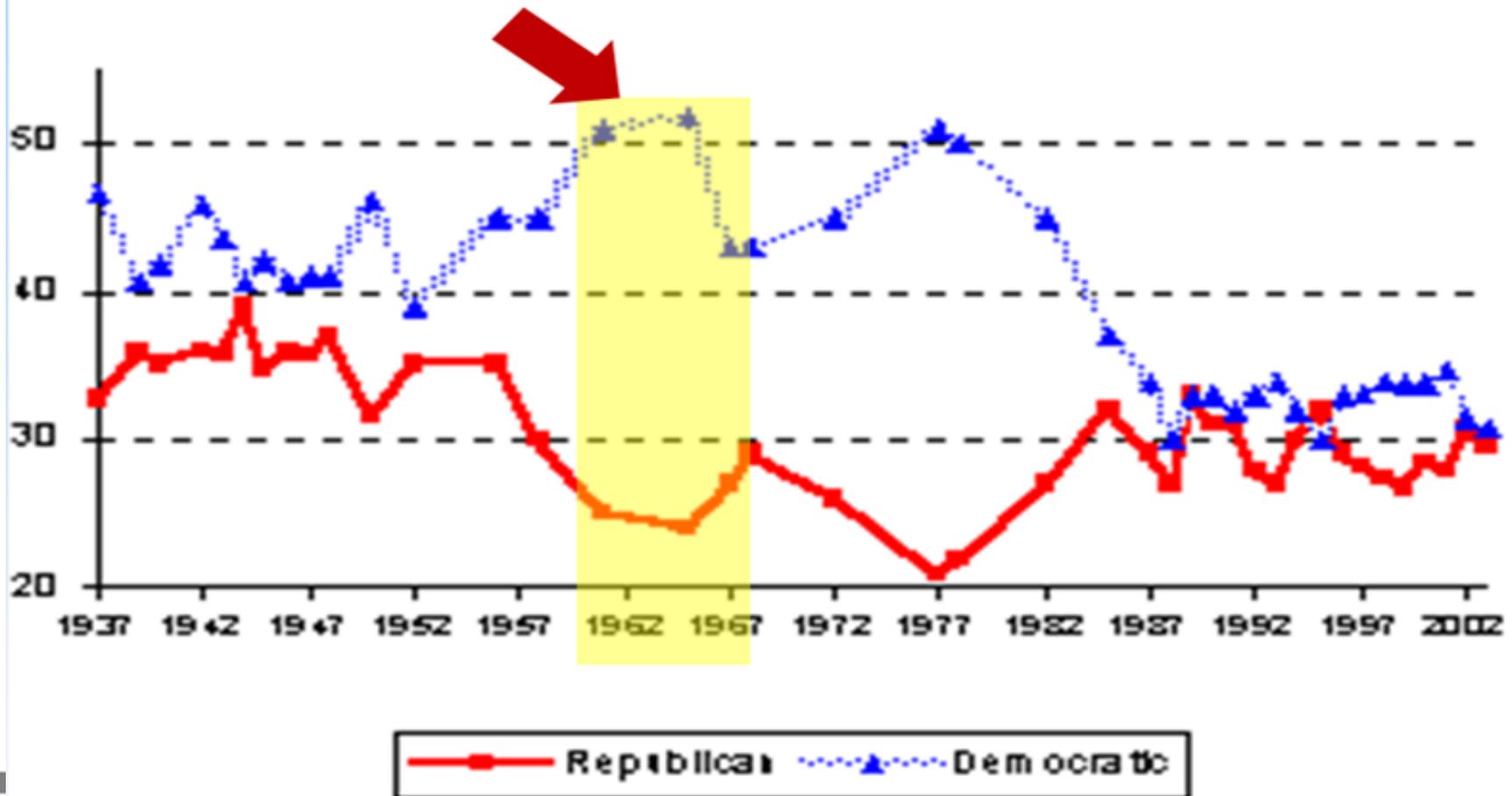
*Bush era shift to the **right***

*Obama era shift to the **left***



Patterns of Presidential Elections

Party Identification in the U.S., 1937-2003



ELECTION RECAP



A SWEEPING VICTORY!
(Republicans)



A CRUSHING DEFEAT
(Democrats & Third Parties)



AN INDIFFERENT MAJORITY
Mavericks, None-of-the-Abovers, Mad-as-Hellers

M. WUERKER

Continued in
Elections 101 Part IV

