**Name:**

**Date:**

**School:**

**Facilitator:**

8.01 Notes Guide

 **“Party Politics”**

Answer the 8.01 Notes Guide as you review the lesson.

Introduction:

What do the red states represent?

What do the blue states represent?

Why are there only two colors showing on the map?

What geographic patterns do you notice about the Democrats and the Republicans (hint: southern states compared to northeastern states)?

History of Party Politics

When the Founding Fathers of the United States drafted the Constitution, they provided for a separation of powers, federalism, and an Electoral College to protect the new republic from political parties. Even George Washington warned against political parties in his Farewell Address in 1796, “Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.”

Despite the efforts of the founders, by 1800 the nation had developed two political parties organized on a national basis.

Two-Party System

Today a       dominates the American political process. The Democratic and Republican parties dominate the presidency, Congress, and the governorships and the state legislatures in most state governments. For example, a Democrat or a Republican has been President since 1852.

How Do I Join?

In some states, political parties hold a closed primary. In those states, a voter must become a       by registering as an official party member in order to vote in that party’s primary. In an open primary state, parties have      . A voter simply supports a party with votes or donations to become a party member.

Party Membership in Alabama

Alabama holds an open primary which means a voter does not have to be a registered member of a political party to vote in the party’s primary. Because Alabama is an open primary state, party membership is more informal.

Party Leadership

Both the Democrats and Republicans have a       who leads their national committee. The national committee consists of members from state parties. The Republican National Committee, RNC, and the Democratic National Committee, DNC, have substantial staff members to organize party operations, raise funds, and campaign for their members.

At the state level, the parties have a central committee that consists of members from county committees. It is the responsibility of state party leaders to provide support to elect its local, state, and national candidates who are running for office.

The       takes place during the summer before the primary election. Party activists gather to formally nominate their candidate and allow the candidate to announce his or her vice-presidential running mate.

Regional Strongholds

The Republican and Democratic parties both seek broad-based support and tend to draw voters from across economic classes and       groups. With the exception of African-American and Jewish voters who traditionally vote for the Democratic presidential candidate, both parties draw significant levels of support from virtually every major socioeconomic group in society.

On the other hand, each party has      , or areas of the country they can count on to have a majority of support from the voters. For example, the southern states have been referred to as the “solid south” due to their dependable vote for one political party or the other. The Democratic Party dominated Alabama’s political process for over 100 years. Following the Civil War, the Republican Party, which supported abolishing slavery, enjoyed little support in the South. Since the 1980’s, the southern states have begun to support the Republican Party in increasingly larger numbers. Analyze the map below to determine which areas might be considered geographic strongholds.

Party Machines

During the       in the late 1800s, many rapidly growing cities experienced a different type of party stronghold that was the result of a corrupt political structure known as political machines.       provided the basic needs and services required to cope with major problems caused by the rapid growth and overcrowding in large cities. The machines often provided services and jobs to the people, especially vulnerable immigrants, in exchange for votes. This quid pro quo systemresulted in a very powerful and corrupt political structure headed by a      .

The Democratic Party

The Democratic Party is the oldest party in the country’s history. It traces its roots to the Democratic-Republican Party organized by Thomas Jefferson in 1792. By 1800, it was a well-established party. It reorganized under Andrew Jackson in 1828 and shortened its name to the Democratic Party in 1844.

Beginning in 1912, the Democratic Party has taken a more       view on social and fiscal issues than the Republican Party.

The Democratic Party today is more likely to gain the votes of:

* African-Americans
* dwellers
* Residents of the Northeastern states or West Coast states
* workers
* Younger voters
* Those with lower income levels
* Those with a high school education or less

Republican Party

The Republican Party, also known as the       or Grand Old Party, was founded by anti-slavery activists in 1854 and became a major party when it elected Abraham Lincoln President of the United States in 1860. Prior to the election of 1860, various other parties such as the Federalists, the National Republicans, and the Whigs had served as the other major party opposing the Democrats.

The Republican Party has taken a more       view on social and fiscal issues than the Democratic Party.

Demographics & Regional Strongholds

The Republic Party is more likely to gain the support of:

* White voters
* Rural dwellers
* Residents of Southern or mid-Western states
* workers
* Middle-aged or older voters
* Those with higher income levels
* Those with

Independent Voters

The voice of “We the People” includes the majority and minority views. Although the two major political parties enjoy a majority of the voters, those voters who are in the minority have the freedom to vote independently or join third parties who represent the minority opinion.

Increasingly, Americans have become disillusioned with       politics and are choosing to remain       of the two major political parties. Such voters may vote in a primary to select candidates if the state has an open primary. They are not able to vote in a primary if the state holds a closed primary. In the election process, candidates seek the votes of independent voters in addition to the votes of their party members. Such voters are referred to as       because they will often fluctuate between supporting the candidates for each of the major parties.

Third Party Influence

Although the two major political parties dominate politics in our nation, third-party candidates play an important role in providing alternatives to disillusioned and independent voters.      , such as the Green Party, Libertarian Party, and Socialist Party are not affiliated with the Democrats or Republicans. Even though they have poor representation in American politics, third parties can have a major impact on close elections by taking away votes from the major party candidates. For example, the Green Party candidate, Ralph Nader, impacted the outcome of the historically close presidential election in 2000.

Third Party Obstacles

Many obstacles exist in the American political system that deter the success of third parties. The Electoral College in itself deters support for third parties. The “     ” structure of our single-member system in the United States places third-party candidates at a disadvantage. The candidate who receives a plurality, or the most votes in a state, even if it is a narrow plurality, wins all of that state’s electoral votes. Unlike proportional systems popular in many democracies, the       permits only one party to win in any given district, thus creating incentives to form national parties with substantial financial resources that make it difficult for new parties to achieve enough financial and popular support to compete.

America's distinctive nominating process is an additional structural barrier to third parties. Candidates for the two major parties are assured a place on the general election ballot after being nominated by their parties in the primaries. On the other hand, qualifying a new party candidate for the ballot can be a difficult and expensive undertaking, often requiring petitions with tens of thousands of signatures. In addition, a third-party candidate must have the ability to attract a sufficient "threshold" proportion of the vote in subsequent elections to remain on the ballot.