

Political parties and platforms



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Political parties are a major part of American politics. These parties consist of a group of people who share the same views and seek to control the government through the winning of elections and the holding of public office. They also have a significant influence on America's moral beliefs and choices.

Every day you hear and see new debates based on the conflicts between these parties. Whether you voted for a certain presidential candidate, the passing of a law or even just a city council member, the decision is inevitably influenced by political parties. The two main parties in the United States are the Republicans and the Democrats. These parties are known for having majorly opposing views; the Republicans are conservative and tend to lean to the far right while the Democrats are very liberal and lean to the left. Sitting in the middle, there are other lesser known parties such as the Green Party of the United States, the Libertarian Party, the Prohibition party, the Justice Party, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Communist Party USA. All these minor parties have little to no influence on American politics, but they still exist to represent the people who do not fit into the category of Republican or Democrat. The Republican versus Democrat conflict has been going on for a very long time. Both parties represent opposing philosophies and ideals, and it's no surprise that they have historically never been able to fully reach a consensus.

The Republican party or the GOP (Grand Old Party) began as a party that supported Thomas Jefferson, who had wanted a decentralized government with limited powers back in 1792. Since then, the party has grown and changed into something quite different from the way it once was. Today, the

Republican party is all for states rights and it opposes federal regulation of issues that have been traditionally handled by them. On the other hand, government control on private, noneconomic issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and gun control are things that this party has publicly supported. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica) The Republican party is now considered by the media and the American people to be the epitome of conservative ideals. The Democratic party formed back when the United States of America was at its humble beginning and is the oldest political party in the US. Ironically, the ideas the party was founded on are exactly what it opposes today. Back in the 1900s, the party was all for slavery and opposed the civil rights movement. Today, it supports the rights of minorities, organized labor, and progressive reform. In contrast to its rival party, the Democrats support government regulation on the economy but oppose it when it concerns the private affairs of citizens. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica) For this reason, the Democrats have been seen as the ones who stand for liberalism in every sense. They tend to appeal more to the younger audience because they are not based solely off of tradition and have continued to evolve as the country has. A huge example of this is the election of democrat, Barack Obama, as president in 2008. He became the first African American president of the US and gave hope to minorities everywhere.

8 years later, in 2016, there was another election that would once again cause a shift in American politics. Donald J. Trump, a Republican, but also a billionaire TV personality was elected president. While Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, Donald Trump's victory came from the

electoral college. While the Republicans rejoiced, the Democrats and other parties wondered what was next for the country. President Trump would become the first president without any prior political experience. So how did he win? In the beginning, no one thought it was possible that Donald Trump would win the election. Everyone took him as a joke. On the other hand, Hillary becoming the first female president seemed just as ridiculous. The two parties had to find a way to push their agenda, and effectively win the favor of the American people. The Democrats focused on issues such as raising workers wages, expanding social security, creating good-paying clean energy jobs, ending systematic racism, protecting voting rights, preventing gun violence and advocating for the rights of the LGBTQ community. The Republican party made promises to rebuild the economy, free financial markets, reduce the federal debt, protect the right to bear arms, encourage environmental progress and push immigration reform. (2016 Democratic Party Platform and 2016 Republican Party Platform) While these platforms were used in various ways, others were in direct competition with the ideals of the other party.

For example, the democratic party openly supported same-sex marriage as well as the inclusion and representation of LGBTQ citizens inside and outside of the workplace. They also specified that they would protect transgender people from the violence they are experiencing based on their personal choices. (Siddiqui and Jacobs) These promises were an effort to gain the support of the LGBTQ community. The Republicans had the complete opposite viewpoint; their platform was based on the concept of natural marriage, discrimination, and they even went as far as supporting conversion

therapy, which is the controversial practice of trying to make LGBTQ people heterosexual. (Siddiqui and Jacobs) This was one of the major issues that split America down the middle, and it became between those who were more secular in their beliefs versus those who were adamantly religious. Another example is the rapid changes occurring in the environment, and how each party addressed fixing them. The Republicans decided to simply just praise coal as an “ abundant, clean, affordable, reliable domestic energy resource.” (Siddiqui and Jacobs) However, the Democrats went way more in depth by expressing their ideas and plans for fighting climate change and encouraging clean energy policies. The Democrats seemed to take the issue much more seriously and planned to continue the work of the Obama administration to lessen the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. (Siddiqui and Jacobs) Since 9/11, terrorism has been another issue that has weighed heavily on the hearts of the American people. Terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda have been a major cause for concern, and both parties realized that.

The democrats mainly promised to “ dismantle the global network of terror” by improving their intelligence capabilities, hardening America’s defenses and seeking an updated Authorization for Use of Military force. They also directly slammed Donald Trump’s slander of Muslims by saying it violates the first amendment right to religious freedom and gives ISIS more power. When it comes to immigration, the Democrats again promised to protect immigrants from the effects of electing a candidate like Donald Trump who may tear apart families to achieve his goals. They also want to fix the immigration system but without the devastating effects of uprooting those already in the countries. (Democratic National Convention) Republicans took

a slightly different approach, relating terrorism back to the issue of immigration. While the party is said to stand by the victims of terrorism, they believe that the broken immigration system is what needs immediate attention. This is why they support the building of a wall along the southern border of the US. This way, less undocumented immigrants that could possibly pose a threat would be able to make their way into the US. In the Republican Platform for 2016 it states “ To keep our people safe, we must secure our borders, enforce our immigration laws, and properly screen refugees and other immigrants entering from any country. In particular, we must apply special scrutiny to those foreign nationals seeking to enter the United States from terror-sponsoring countries or from regions associated with Islamic terrorism.” (Republican Platform 2016) This is the plan the now president Donald Trump has continuously tried to push through.

All these platforms and issues continued to remain relevant as the country faced the 2018 midterm elections. America was on the edge of its seat as election day drew near, and people from politicians to celebrities were encouraging the nation to cast their vote. Two years into President Trump’s presidency, influencers wanted to make sure to let the public know that their voice could be heard over his fiery comments. The Republicans and Democrats also began to gear up for the election. Though the Republicans had controlled both the House and the Senate, there was now an opportunity for the Democrats to take back the house, and they were determined to do so. Healthcare, the Supreme Court, the economy and women’s rights. These are the issues that weighed heavily on the minds of the American people. When it came to healthcare, the parties were mainly focusing on a past

decision with the name of the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare. The Democrats would do anything in their power to keep it, while the Republicans had been working non-stop to get rid of it. In correspondence to this, 51% of people said that the Democrats would do a better job dealing with healthcare while only 35% said the Republicans would. Also, according to a political ad tracking firm, Democrats had spent 125 million on ads focused on healthcare while the Republicans had only spent 50 million. (Al Jazeera) Overall, the Democrats seemed to believe that salvaging their former presidents' policy would push voters in their direction. Next, the United States Supreme Court is supposed to represent justice and morality. But what happens when an appointee doesn't fit the criteria? Brett Kavanaugh was President Trump's choice to fill the role of Supreme Court Justice until controversy sparked over sexual assault claims. This should've ended all chances of him being appointed but things proceeded to take an interesting turn.

In the end, Kavanaugh was still appointed and it looked like the results could send voters either way. Though the court was moved further right, the public may have been moved further left. This made the Trump administration and the Republican party look ignorant and insensitive. Ironically, the President himself is also known for his derogatory comments towards women, and that could also have hurt the Republican campaign. The President and the Republicans also no longer wanted to fund planned parenthood and are known for being pro-life. These were all hits towards women's independence and ability to control their own fate. Fortunately for him, the improved state of the economy would definitely help him offset the damage. Unemployment

was at a record low (3.7%) thanks to his new policies. (Al Jazeera) Other aspects of the economy such as the stock market had been experiencing positive growth as well, and though it started with the Obama administration, the President and the Republicans took it to new heights and I believe that the voters did acknowledge that. In the end, the Democrats did succeed in taking back the house. They needed to fill 218 seats and ended up with 235. (The Associated Press) I believe this was a direct result of people's concerns about healthcare, the supreme court, and women's rights. I also believe the push to vote was much stronger in this midterm election than ever and this result proved that every vote really does matter. The Republican's also had a victory, managing to stay in control of the Senate and keep control of states like Texas. While many factors could be considered in trying to explain and analyze these results, I think the most important question to ask is what happens now? Congress is split right down the middle and so is the country. The two parties now have more of an equal playing field despite a right-wing president in office. America may face an even harder time getting decisions through all the branches or getting anything done at all. The political parties of the United States will continue to go head to head on every problem until the next election comes to pass.