

# Major political parties in the united states

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Today, the politics of the United States government is controlled by two dominant political parties: the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. These two political parties dominated US politics from 1860 to the present. This is not to say that the US electoral system does not allow the existence of a multiple party system. It should be noted that the development of a two-party system in the United States was due perhaps to the relative contradiction of ideology and platforms of government between these two parties.

US voters historically perceived this difference as necessary because of the need to maximize the saliency of political choice. When one set of policies failed, the voters had the option of voting the policies of the other party. This is called polarization. Hence, an understanding of the ideology of each political party is needed. In 1854, anti-slavery politicians met at Ripon, Wisconsin to form the Republican Party. After a year, the party grew rapidly displacing the Whig Party as the primary opposition party to the Democratic Party.

In 1859, it nominated Abraham Lincoln as president in the 1860 election. After the election of Abraham Lincoln, the party became a symbol of anti-slavery, and after the war, the period of Reconstruction. Early Republicans advocated the slogan ' free labor, free land, and free men. ' The Republican Party believed that class mobility is an important factor in economic development. According to Republican ideology, individuals have the right to determine their economic status, given economic circumstances. The party also advocated a countrywide redistribution of land.

Early Republicans believed that giving away government-owned land would rapidly end slavery. From 1859 to 1865, the party was actively anti-slavery in the Western territories as a means to check the intentions of the Confederacy. After the Civil War, the party changed some of its political beliefs. It supported big businesses, the annexation of Hawaii, and generous pensions for Union veterans. With the rapid growth of the transportation and manufacturing sectors, the party advocated the implementation of a countrywide subsidy program and the imposition of higher tariffs on foreign goods.

Today, the party advocates a Keynesian approach to economic development, emphasizing the need for the government to adjust its expenditures based on growth patterns. The party also supports lowering both the optimal tax rates and the general tariff rates as a means to boost the economy. Social welfare is deemphasized in present Republican ideology. The origin of the Democratic Party can be traced back to the party founded by Jefferson, Madison, and other politicians opposing the Federalists.

The modern Democratic Party, however, was founded with the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency. From 1860 to 1920, the party positioned itself to the left of the Republican Party on a number of economic, political, and social issues. The election of Woodrow Wilson revived the influence of the party in policy-making, after 30 years of political hibernation. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt was elected president of the United States. His New Deal program increased the political base of the party, and became the economic framework of the US government until the 1970s.

The ideology of the Democratic Party differs from that of the Republican Party in three respects. First, the party advocates social liberalism, emphasizing the institutionalization of affirmative action and social freedom. Second, the party believes in a free-enterprise system regulated by government intervention. Third, the party believes that the government should play a role in alleviating poverty and the use of progressive taxation. Democratic ideology asserts that ' economic development is assumed to be a function of social progress. '

I learned that both the federal and state governments are governed by a system of checks and balances. The government is divided into three branches which are assumed to be equal in integrity and power. Both in federal and state governments, the legislatures act as the lawmaking body. The executive branch of government approves or vetoes legislations approved by Congress. The legislative branch approves the budget, reserves the right to declare war, and examines the operations of the government through committee hearings and investigations.

These powers act as a check to the actions of the executive branch. The judicial branch of government reserves the power to examine the constitutionality of statutes passed by Congress. This is called ' power of judicial review. ' This power acts as a check to the legislative branch. It can also make recommendations to the federal government on issues of legality/constitutionality of specific government actions/policies. The members of the judicial branch are appointed by the president, with the concurrence of Congress.

This serves as a check to the power of the judicial branch. Comments Regarding the Instructor, the Course, and Class Requirements The instructor is very efficient in giving information about the American government, pointing out salient issues and problems. The course is a good starting point towards a more deep and critical understanding of the history of the US government. Class requirements are by no means heavy. Much of the class requirements reflect the learning experience necessary for a full understanding of US politics and governance.