



**ZUSAS**

Zentrum für USA-Studien  
Stiftung Leucorea  
Lutherstadt Wittenberg

# The American Political System

## Institutions and Culture

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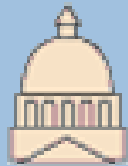


# The Federal System

- The Federal Government
- The Fifty States
- Counties and Cities



# The Federal Government



**Legislative**  
*The Congress*



**Executive**  
*The President*



**Judicative**  
*The Supreme Court*



# The Congress

## *House of Representatives:*

- 435 members
- Elected every 2 years
- Congressional Districts
- Equal Population

## *U.S. Senate:*

- 100 members
- 2 for every state
- Elected every 6 years



# The Supreme Court

- 9 members for lifetime during good behavior
- Nominated by the President
- Confirmed by the Senate
- Controversies between the U.S. and the states and between the states
- Judicial Review: Are laws constitutional?



# The President

- Elected for a term of 4 years
- Reelection possible for a second term
- Head of the executive and head of state
- Commander in chief
- Impeachment for treason, bribery, high crime and misdemeanors
- 43 Presidents since 1789

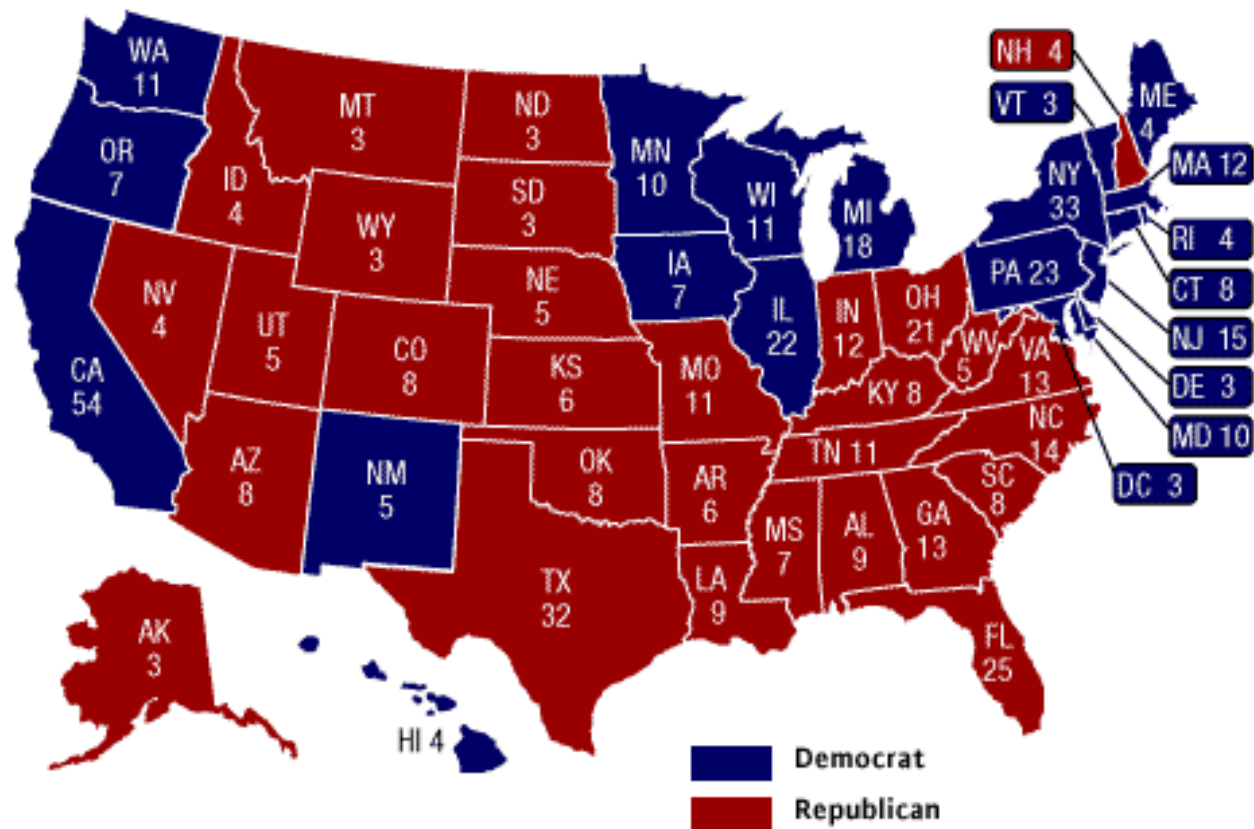


# Presidential Elections

- Presidential Primaries
- Nomination Conventions
- General Elections
- Voters vote for candidates in the 50 states
- Winner takes it all!
- Electoral College elects the President



# Presidential Elections 2000



Source: [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)





# Presidential Elections 2000

Thursday, Dec. 21, 2000 | Updated 3:01 p.m. EST

## National Presidential Summary

538 of 538 electoral votes declared

✓ declared winner

Candidates	Electoral Votes	Popular Votes	%
✓ George W. Bush (R)	271	50,456,169	48
Al Gore (D)	267	50,996,116	48
Ralph Nader (Green)	0	2,831,066	3
Pat Buchanan (Ref.)	0	447,798	0



Source: [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)



# Political Culture

- Collective Values and Orientations
- Stable over time
- Rooted in history



# The Founding of the U.S.

- Declaration of Independence of 4th July 1776 written by Thomas Jefferson
- U.S. Constitution of 1787 drafted by the Philadelphia Convention
- The Bill of Rights of 1791



The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Robert  
New Haven



# The Declaration of Independence

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that  
**all men are created equal**, that they are  
endowed by their Creator with certain  
unalienable rights, that among these are  
**Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.**

That to secure these rights, governments  
are instituted among Men, deriving their  
just powers from the **consent of the  
governed.**

*John Jay* *John Adams* *Thomas Jefferson* *Samuel Adams*  
We the People  
Signed at the City of New York



# The U.S. Constitution

- Oldest written constitution still in force
- 7 Original articles
- 10 Amendments in 1791: Bill of Rights
- Only 17 Amendments since 1791
- We the People (popular sovereignty)
- Republican form of government
- Separation of Powers



# The Bill of Rights

- Freedom of religion, speech and the press
- Right to bear arms
- No unreasonable searches and seizures
- Due process of law
- No cruel and unusual punishment



# Historical Principles

- Rights of the individual
- Equality of respect and opportunity
- Fear of tyranny and mistrust of government
- Republicanism and good citizenship
- Popular sovereignty and democracy
- Ordered liberty
- Representative government
- Rule of law





# Democracy

- Rule of the people by elections
- More elective offices than anywhere else
- Distrust of elites
- Distrust of government intervention
- Local government



# Liberty

- Personal freedom from government control
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom to dissent from the majority
- Religious freedom
- Free market and enterprise



# Individualism

- Equality of opportunity, not result
- Self-reliance
- American Dream
- Acceptance of material inequality



# Conclusion

- Liberal political culture
- Conservative social values (religion, morality, patriotism, community)
- Gap between ideals and reality
- U.S. diverse and multicultural society



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