



Third Parties: What role do they play in American politics?

Purpose: In this lesson, students will explore the important role third parties have played in the American political process. Students will investigate and analyze the obstacles third party and independent candidates must overcome to run for the presidency. Students will participate in a case study examination of the Tea Party movement to determine whether or not the movement will develop into a true third party.

Objectives:

1. Students will investigate the history and role of third parties in American politics.
2. Students will identify and evaluate the barriers and challenges faced by third parties.
3. Students will analyze data and primary documents regarding third parties and apply that knowledge in a small group discussion.
4. Students will examine the history and purpose of the Tea Party movement in order to predict whether or not the Tea Party will evolve into a third party.

Key Words:

ballot

ideology

presidential debates

signature requirement

third parties

Tea Party

Ancillary Resources: *Third Parties: What role do they play in American politics* PowerPoint presentation.

Materials:

1. Teacher transparencies- *T-Shirt Activity (included on PPT presentation)*
2. Student resource, *The Formation and Role of Third Parties.(Versions A and B)*
3. Notes and overhead with copy of *History of American Third Parties.*
4. Overhead with copy of *Purpose of Third Parties.*
5. Overhead with copy of *3rd Party Political Cartoons: George Wallace American Independent Party, 1968 election; Ross Perot in 1996; Nader and the Green Party, 2000; Nader Voter in 2000; Ralph Nader and 2004 Presidential Election; Ralph Nader Math Problem 2004 Presidential Election.*
6. Student Resource, *The Twenty-First Century Tea Party Movement*
7. Political Cartoons, *The Tea Party*
8. Student resource, *Tea Party: Third Party or Powerful Political Movement*
9. Assessment: *Designing a Message: Third Parties T-Shirt*
10. Extension Activity Resources, *Third Parties: Barriers and Challenges*

Procedure:

1. **Warm-up:** Today we are going to select a final shirt color for our government club fundraiser. Earlier voting concluded with Blue and Yellow as the finalists. Each color has a party that is supporting its elect. Display transparency 1, The Government Club T-shirt. Ask students to decide which party they support and move into two groups. Then display the second transparency, The Third Party and describe the situation with Red. Red ran in the early voting but wasn't elected. Red started its own party to be elected as the Government Club T-shirt. What should the yellow and blue parties do? Allow students to brainstorm some ideas and display transparency 3, Ideas. Students should weigh the pros and cons of each idea and reach a final decision as to how to deal with Red.

This is a rudimentary simulation of what happens when third party candidates enter a race? The two major parties- the Democrats and Republicans have to consider how to handle a candidate that could take votes from their candidate. In some cases, Independents have gone on to win without the support of one of the major parties.

2. **History of American Third Parties:** Display the *History of Third Parties* overhead and discuss the role third parties have played in presidential elections. Ask students to read the student resource, *The Formation and Role of Third Parties* and identify possible answers to the following questions:
 - If third party candidates are seldom elected, why do they continue to exist? What purpose do they serve in the political process?
3. **Purpose of Third Parties:** Put up the overhead *Purpose of American Third Parties* and ask students to analyze the function of third parties in the American political process.
 - How do the major political parties respond to the campaigns of third parties?
 - Does this response help or hurt the democratic process? Explain.
4. **Transition: Political Satire.**
 - *George Wallace, in 1968:* <http://www.wku.edu/Library/onlinexh>
 - *I Always Waste My Vote...* http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/t/third_party.asp
 - *T.R. vs. Taft, Election of 1912-* <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/election-cartoons/images/mother-of-presidents.gif>
 - *The Bathtub...* http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/t/third_party.asp
 - *Independent Voters?* <http://3rdpartyblogger.com/political-cartoons/political-cartoons-2/>
 - *Ralph Nader and the 2004 Election:* <http://politicalhumor.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://cagle.slate.msn.com/news/Nader2004/main.asp>
 - *The Libertarians....* <http://www.independentpoliticalreport.com/2010/11/political-cartoon-from-the-libertarian-party-of-ohio/>
 - *The Nader Oval Office-* <http://politicalhumor.about.com/library/images/blpic-naderovaloffice.htm>

Project the images and ask students to address the following:

- Interpret and analyze the cartoon (hint: consider the context of the given election as well as the winners and losers).

- Identify the symbols used by the cartoonist.
 - What message is the artist communicating?
 - What does the cartoon imply about the experience of third party candidates and their supporters in the American presidential election process?
 - How do the third party candidates affect the Democratic or Republican candidates for president?
 - To what extent do third party candidates affect elections? What are the goals of third party candidates?
5. Complete a case study of the current Tea Party movement. Students will examine resources, newspaper stories and articles about the tea party to predict whether or not the Tea Party will develop into a true third party or remain a movement and be absorbed by one of the major political parties.
 6. Distribute the student resource, *The Twenty-First Century Tea Party Movement*. Ask students to circle evidence that the Tea Party might be a political party and underline evidence that would support it remaining a political movement.
 7. Display the political cartoons, *The Tea Party*. Students should take notes to support the idea that they are a political party or movement. For homework have students research and find evidence about the Tea Party using the student resource, *Tea Party: Third Party or Powerful Movement*. After students have completed research have the class debate and discuss the question: Will the Tea Party become a third party or remain a political movement?
 8. Wrap-up: Ask the students to design a t-shirt that accurately describes the role(s) of third parties in American politics. Use the rubric, *Designing a Message: Third Parties T-Shirt*.

Appendix: Third Party PowerPoint – a resource for teachers that includes many of the important content elements of the lesson.

Extension Activities:

1. **Supplementary Reading**: Have students read the article *Third-Party Candidates in Presidential and Non-Presidential Elections* (see *Third Parties Article* handout) for homework prior to the class on third parties. This article chronicles the challenges faced by third party candidates.
2. **Class Debate**: Should the current presidential election process be reformed to change the two party system and include more third parties?

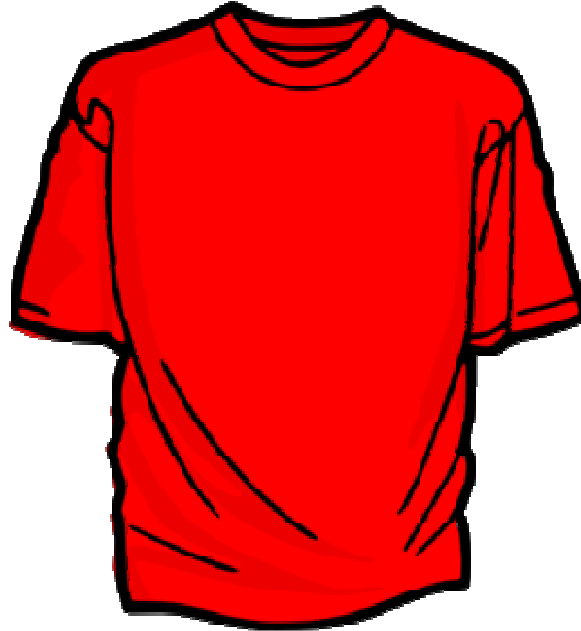
The Government Club T-Shirt



**Today, we will be selecting the color for the new government club T-shirt.
The choices as determined by early voting are blue and yellow.**

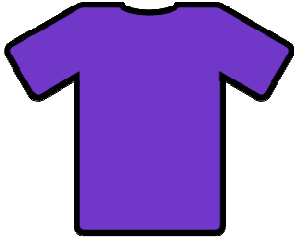
Which would you vote for?

Third Party



We have a problem. Red, who was eliminated during the early voting has made a comeback
And wants to be considered for adoption as the T-shirt color.
What might the supporters of Blue and Yellow do?

Ideas:



Either of the parties can absorb red and become purple or orange.



Either party can use red for printing or design.



The parties can ignore yellow.

Other ideas. What are the pros and cons of each idea?

The Formation and Role of Third Parties (Version A)

Although it is challenging for third parties to survive and thrive in the American political system, these parties continue to make important contributions to the political process, revealing sectional and political divides and bringing light to new issues.

The decision to form a political party can be a difficult one. Most parties are rooted in social movements formed of activists and groups whose primary goal is to influence public policy. Parties aim to accomplish the same goal, but they also run candidates for elected office. Making this transition requires a substantial amount of financial and human resources, as well as a broad base of political support to compete in elections. Throughout history, therefore, very few social movements have evolved into parties. Those that have succeeded in this mission have had the support of the political elites and uninhibited access to the ballot.

For example, during the 1840's and 1850's, the Liberty and Free Soil Parties formed around the abolition issue. The parties' leaders were well-educated northerners who comprised a significant proportion of the electorate at that time. But, when civil rights issues emerged on the agenda again in the early twentieth century, it was through a social movement by social activists in groups such as the NAACP. One reason why this social movement did not become a party was the fact that black voters in areas where segregation had the most significant impact were largely denied the vote and could not have voted for potential party candidates. The ability of the current tea party movements to develop into full-fledged third party will hinge on many of these same variables.

Minor parties based on causes often neglected by the major parties have significantly affected American politics. Third parties find their roots in sectionalism (as did the Southern states' rights Dixiecrats, who broke away from the Democrats in 1948), in economic protest (such as the agrarian revolt that fueled the Populists, an 1892 prairie-states party), in specific issues (such as the Green Party's support of the environment), in ideology (the Socialist, Communist, and Libertarian Parties are examples), and in appealing, charismatic personalities (Theodore Roosevelt's affiliation with the Bull Moose Party in 1912 is perhaps the best case).

Third parties achieve their greatest successes when they incorporate new ideas or alienated groups or nominate attractive candidates as their standard-bearers. Third parties do best when declining trusts in the two major political parties plagues the electorate. Usually, though, the parties' ideas are eventually co-opted by one of the two major parties, each of them eager to take the politically popular issue that gave rise to the third party and make it theirs in order to secure the allegiance of the third party's supporters. For example, The Republicans of the 1970's absorbed many of the states' rights planks of George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid. Both major parties have also more recently attempted to attract independent voters by sponsoring reforms of the governmental process, such as the ongoing attempts to reform the nation's campaign finance laws.

What are some of America's major third parties?

Third Party	Year Founded	Primary Purpose
Liberty/Free Soil	1840	Abolition of slavery
Prohibition	1880	Prohibition of alcohol sale and consumption
Progressive/Bull Moose	1912	Factionalism in the Republican party; gave Theodore Roosevelt the platform to run for the presidency
American Independent	1968	States' rights, opposed to desegregation
Libertarian	1971	Opposition to government intervention in economic and social policy
Reform	1996	Economic issues; tax reform, national debt, federal deficit
Green	2000	Environmental and social justice

Unlike many European countries that use proportional representation (a voting system that apportions legislative seats according to the percentage of votes a political party receives), the United States has a single-member, plurality electoral system, often referred to as the **winner-take-all-system**, or a system in which the party that receives at least one more vote than any other party wins the election. To paraphrase the legendary football coach Vince Lombardi, finishing first is not everything, it is the only thing in U.S. politics; placing second, even by one vote doesn't count. The winner-take-all-system encourages the grouping of interests into as few parties as possible (the democratic minimum being two).

The Electoral College system and the rules of public financing for American presidential elections also make it difficult for third parties to seriously compete. Not only must a candidate win a majority of the public vote, but he or she must do it in states that allow them to win a total of 270 electoral votes.

Are Third Parties Good for the American Political System?

Arguments for:

- Third parties allow for a greater diversity of opinions.
- Third parties can provide useful solutions to political problems on the local and regional level.
- Third parties encourage greater participation in the American political system.

Arguments against:

- Third parties act as spoilers rather than as issue definers.
- Third parties are often composed of political extremists who seek to undermine real politics.
- Third parties undermine the stability of the American Political system.

Questions to consider:

The US is the only major Western nation that does not have at least one significant and enduring national third party.

- Why is this?
- Does it matter?

Should we change our electoral process to include more third party participation? Why or why not?

How do third parties influence politics in the United States? Is this a good or bad thing? Explain.

O'Connor, Karen & Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform*. Longman: Boston: 2011. pp 409-12.

The Formation and Role of Third Parties (Version B)

SECTION ONE. The two major political parties in the United States are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These two parties have major advantages in American elections although third parties such as the Libertarian, Green and Reform parties continue to exist and make important contributions to the political process. These third parties often bring regional or sectional issues to light that are not being addressed by either of the major parties.

1. The two major political parties in the United States are the _____ and _____ parties.
2. An example of an American third party is the _____.
3. Third parties often represent (local/national) issues that would otherwise not enter the political arena. (Circle the best answer)

SECTION TWO. Forming a new political party is not easy. Political parties are formed by citizens who are motivated by a particular issue or topic that moves them to want to change public policy. The difference between a third party and a special interest group is that the political party seeks to have its members elected to office. It is very expensive and takes a lot of dedicated activists to get members elected to office. Throughout U.S. history very few social movements have evolved into political parties.

1. Political parties are generally started by _____ who are dedicated to changing public policy through electing supporters to office.
2. Because it is so _____ many social movements do not turn into political parties.

SECTION THREE. Minor parties are often formed because an issue has been neglected by the major parties. These minor parties have significantly affected American politics. Issues that generally appeal to third parties includes *sectionalism (issues that relate to one are of the country), economic protest, environmental concerns, ideology and in promoting appealing charismatic personalities*. In 1948, the Southern State's Rights *Dixiecrats* broke from the Democratic party over issues of desegregation (an example of sectionalism) and in 1912 the Bull Moose party provided Theodore Roosevelt the opportunity to run for a third term as President (a definite example of a charismatic personality and salient political issue).

Third parties achieve the most success when they have fresh new ideas, attractive candidates or seek to include people formerly disenfranchised or left out of the political process. They also find success when the two major parties are unable to gain the trust of the people. Usually, the ideas put forth by the Third Parties are incorporated into the platforms of one of the two major parties. This is done to try to keep party members from voting for third party candidates. The Republicans of the 1970's adopted many of the states' rights ideas of George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid in an effort to keep votes away from *spoiler* third party candidates.

1. Issues adopted by the third parties have usually been _____ by the major parties.
2. _____ is an issue that is found in only one part of the nation. States' rights is an issue that tends to be important in the southern part of the United States.

3. In this paragraph, *disenfranchised* refers to people who are not included in the _____.
4. The Republicans of the 1970's adopted many of the states' rights ideas of George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid in an effort to keep votes away from *spoiler* third party candidates.

Which word is the best definition for *spoiler* in this sentence?

- a. A candidate who helps a party win an election
- b. A person who supports a specific cause or issue
- c. A third party candidate who takes votes away from a major political party
- d. A third party candidate who gives votes to the major political party

SECTION FOUR.

What are some of America's major third parties?

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Green	2000	Environmental and social justice

Many third parties do not succeed in getting their candidates elected to office. When they do it is usually in a local election and not in a congressional or presidential election. The United States has a *winner-takes-all-system* in which the party that receives at least one vote more than any other party wins the election. To paraphrase the legendary football coach, Vince Lombardi, finishing first in not everything, it is the only thing in U.S. politics; placing second, even by one vote doesn't count. The *winner-take-all system* encourages the grouping of interests into as few parties as possible (the democratic minimum being two).

In order for a third party candidate to win the Presidency, he or she must account for votes in the Electoral College. This means that he or she must win in the states that will allow the candidate

to garner 270 votes in the Electoral College. This requires a lot of money and manpower which are often scarce in third parties.

1. The *winner-take-all-system* of the American electoral process means that if you don't win a _____ of votes your party won't receive any representation in government.
2. It is difficult for third party candidates to be elected to the Presidency because they have to get a majority of votes in the _____.

Are Third Parties Good for the American Political System?

Arguments for:

- Third parties allow for a greater diversity of opinions.
- Third parties can provide useful solutions to political problems on the local and regional level.
- Third parties encourage greater participation in the American political system.

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Questions to consider:

The US is the only major Western nation that does not have at least one significant and enduring national third party.

- Why is this?
- Does it matter?

Should we change our electoral process to include more third party participation? Why or why not?

O'Connor, Karen & Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform*. Longman: Boston: 2011. pp 409-12.

Key for *The Formation and Role of Third Parties (Version B)*

SECTION ONE.

1. The two major political parties in the United States are the Democrat and Republican parties.
2. An example of a third party is the Libertarian, Green, or Reform
3. Third parties often represent (local/national) issues that would otherwise not enter the political arena.

SECTION TWO.

1. Political parties are generally started by activists who are dedicated to changing public policy through electing supporters to office.
2. Because it is so expensive many social movements do not turn into political parties.

SECTION THREE.

1. Issues adopted by third parties have often been incorporated or included by the major parties.
2. Sectionalism is an issue that is found in only one part of the nation. States' rights is an issue that tends to be important in the southern part of the United States.
3. In this paragraph, *disenfranchised* refers to people who are not included in the electoral Process.
4. The Republicans of the 1970's adopted many of the states' rights ideas of George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid in an effort to keep votes away from *spoiler* third party candidates.

Which word is the best definition for *spoiler* in this sentence?

c. A third party candidate who takes votes away from a major political party

SECTION FOUR.

1. The *winner-take-all system* of the American electoral process means that if you don't win a majority of votes your party won't receive any representation in government.
2. It is difficult for third party candidates to be elected to the Presidency because they have to get a majority of votes in the electoral college.

History of American Third Parties

1. No minor third party as ever come close to winning the presidency:

- Only **8** have won as much as a single electoral vote.
- Only **5** third party candidates including TR in 1912 and Ross Perot in 1992 have won more than 10% of popular vote.

2. Roots of Third Parties;

- *Sectionalism*: 1948 – Dixiecrats
- *Economic protest*: 1892 – Populist
- *Specific issues*: Prohibition Party – Progressive Era
- *Ideology*: Socialist, Communists, Libertarian
- *Charismatic personalities*: 1912 – TR
- *Combination Parties*: George Wallace in 1968 (dynamic leader w/ firm geographic base, South w/ emotional issue, civil rights; Ross Perot in 1992)

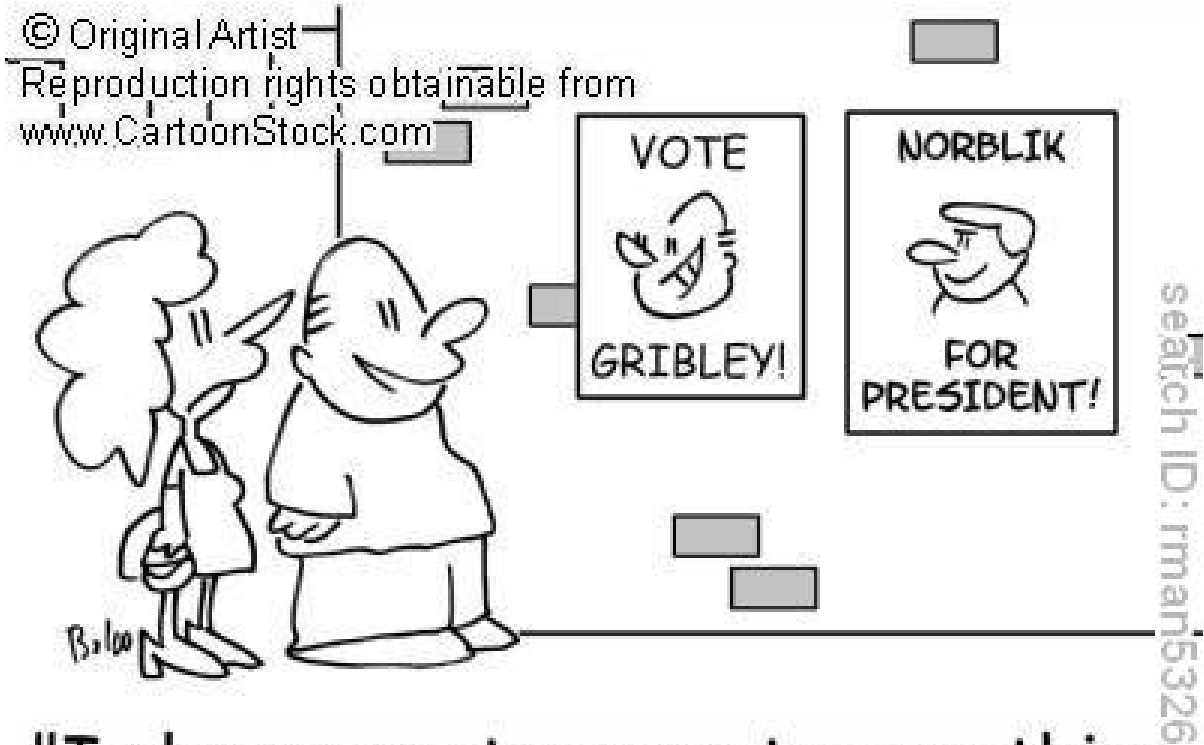
Purpose of Third Parties

1. The electoral progress of third parties is in direct proportion to the failure of the two major parties to incorporate new ideas
2. Influence: Major parties often take on the ideas of third parties.
 - The Democratic Party in 1896 incorporated much of the Populist Party's platform.
 - The Republican Party in 1970s took on George Wallace's "states' rights" plank.
 - Both the Republican and Democratic Parties in 1992 took on Perot's reform government ideas, reduce the deficit.
3. Once the major parties incorporate their ideas, third parties "burn out."

George Wallace, American Independent Party,
1968 Election



<http://www.wku.edu/Library/onlinxh>



"I always waste my vote on a third party that can't win — that way I don't feel so guilty afterwards."

Overhead

T.R. vs. Taft, Election of 1912

22176
Calo



<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/election-cartoons/images/mother-of-presidents.gif>

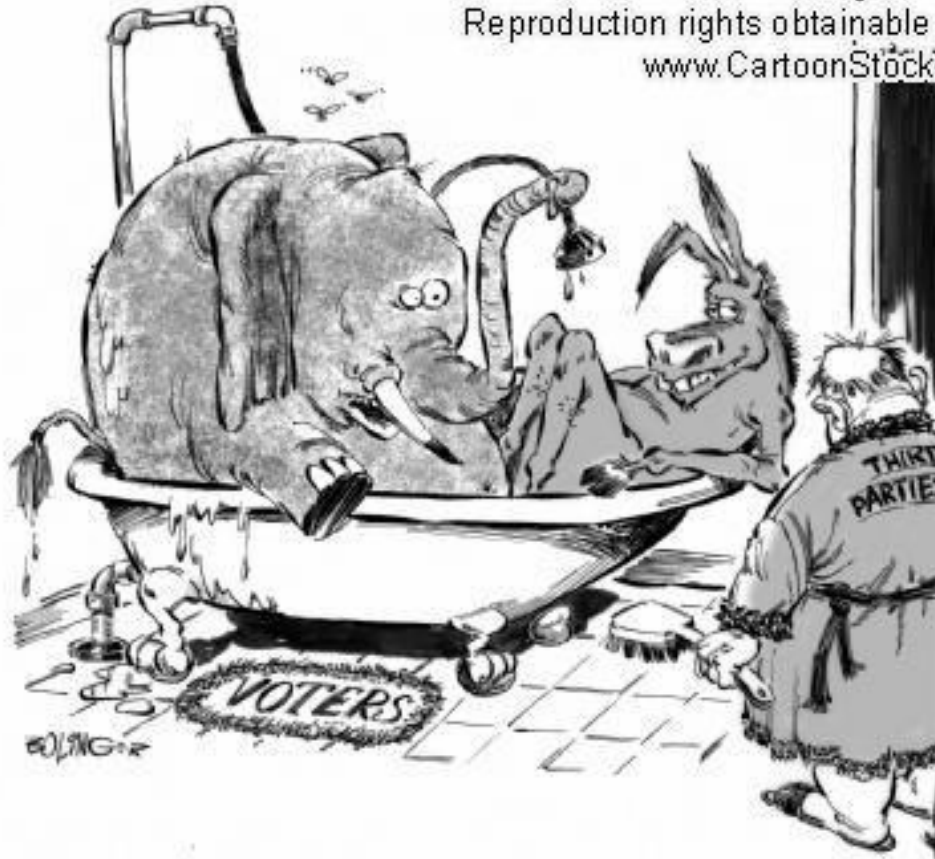
Overhead

The Bathtub...

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search ID: bbon269

"You can try but it's pretty small in here...the water's going cold and the good soap is gone."

www.cartoonstock.com/directory/t/third_party.asp

Independent Voters?



<http://3rdpartyblogger.com/political-cartoons/political-cartoons-2/>

Overhead

Ralph Nader and the 2004 Presidential Election



M. E. Cohen, New Jersey, Freelance.

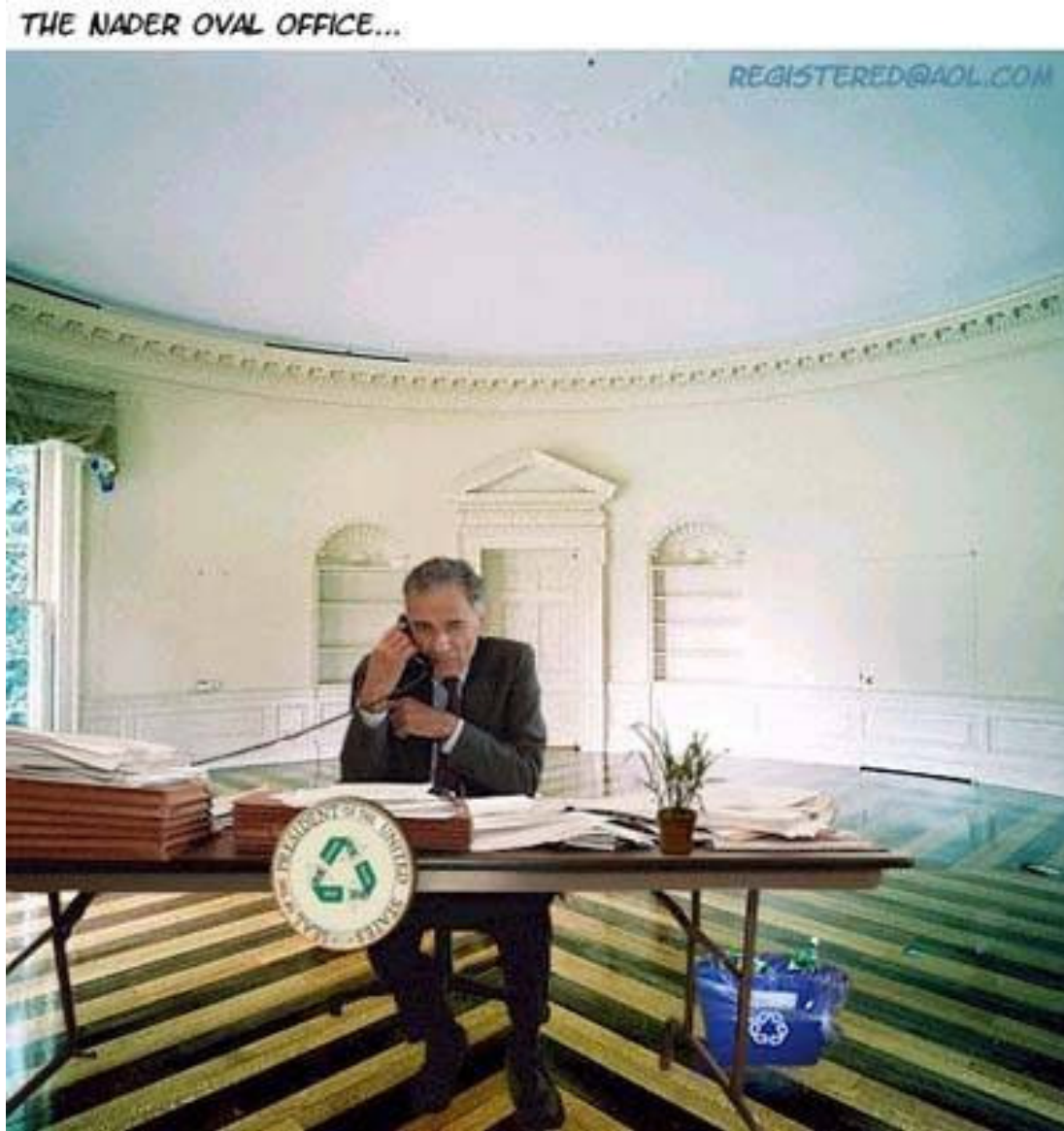
<http://politicalhumor.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://cagle.slate.msn.com/news/Nader2004/main.asp>

The Libertarians....



<http://www.independentpoliticalreport.com/2010/11/political-cartoon-from-the-libertarian-party-of-ohio/>

The Nader Oval Office

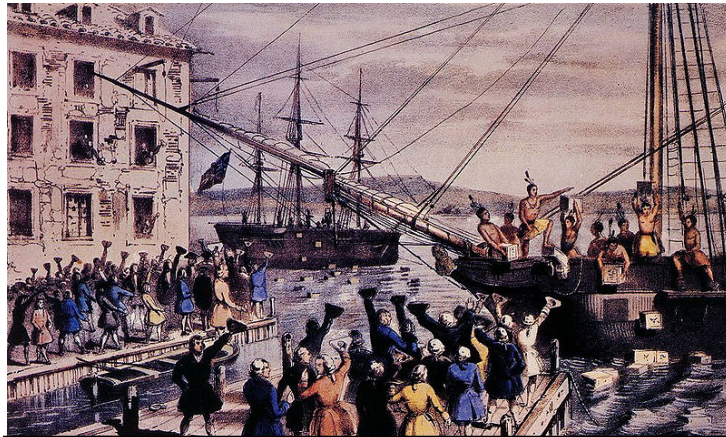


<http://politicalhumor.about.com/library/images/blpic-naderovaloffice.htm>

The Twenty-First Century Tea Party Movement

By Brent Scher

On December 16, 1773, colonists in Boston staged a protest against the British government in response to the Tea Act. The Tea Act forced the colonists to buy tea only from the British East India Company, extending the company's monopoly on tea to the colonies. The colonists saw this act as a new tax being imposed on them by the British, which they saw as unjust because they believed that only their own elected representatives had the right to tax them. There was resistance to the Tea Act in port cities throughout the colonies. In New York and Philadelphia, the ships carrying the tea were sent back to Britain without unloading any of the crates. In Boston, however, a group of colonists boarded the ships and threw all of the crates overboard into the Boston Harbor. This iconic protest came to be known as the Boston Tea Party, and became a symbol for the American Revolution.



1846 Lithograph by Nathaniel Currier depicting the 1773 Boston Tea Party

Today the United States is experiencing a new brand of Tea Party that is taking the country by storm. Beginning in February 2009, citizens began to come together for Tea Party gatherings in cities and towns across the United States. These protests were for the most part organized by average Americans. Keli Carender, a Seattle teacher in her thirties whose political activity extended only as far as writing a political blog, is credited with organizing some of the first Tea Parties. Before they were even called Tea Parties, she organized a February 16, 2009 protest, called “the porkulus,” in response to the Obama administration’s \$787 billion economic stimulus package. American political analysts Scott Rasmussen and Douglas Schoen describe this early protest as “a spontaneous, grassroots rebellion, driven by anger and fear of the implications of President Barack Obama’s excessive government spending initiatives and frustration with a seemingly out-of-touch and ineffective government.” In only two years, the Tea Party message has caught on. An April 2010 Rasmussen Reports poll claimed that there were more Americans who agreed with the Tea Party on the major issues, than Americans who agreed with President Obama on the same issues.

The Tea Party movement was not simply a response to the stimulus bill. The Tea Party was motivated by the United States’ response to the economic crisis during the administrations of both President George W. Bush and President Obama. The movement gained both its name and much momentum from a live telecast by CNBC financial analyst Rick Santelli on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange on February 19, 2009. In what has now become an infamous rant,

Santelli voiced his opposition to the financial bailouts of the failing sectors of the United States' economy by the federal government. He spoke directly to American's who felt that their tax dollars were being spent irresponsibly in order to bailout those that didn't deserve to be bailed out. Santelli ended his rant by calling for everyone who agreed with him to meet for a Chicago Tea Party. Although not many were watching this live telecast, it became an instant internet sensation. It has been viewed over one million times on YouTube.

Within hours, Tea Party organizing websites sprouted up across the internet. The use of social networking websites such as YouTube and Facebook played an important role in the rise of a group like the Tea Party. "There would be no Tea Party had there not been a fundamental transformation of America's media landscape," write Schoen and Rasmussen. "It has been a ground-up movement, spread virally, blog by blog, website to website, beneath the surface." What began as independently organized grassroots protests, has turned into the most vibrant political force in modern American politics. The movement grew at an outstanding rate. On April 15, 2009, just about two months after Carender's initial "porkulus" protest, tea parties were held in honor of Tax Day in over 750 cities and towns across the country.

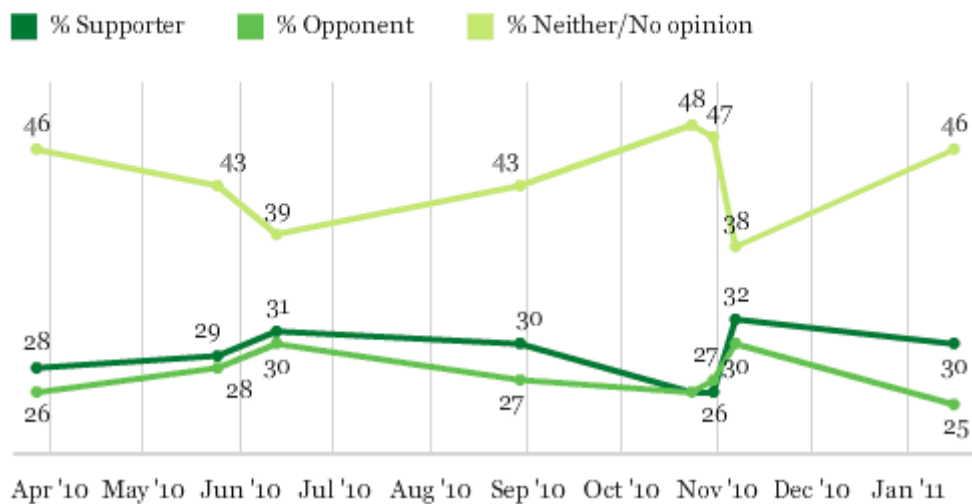


April 15, 2009, Tax Day Tea Party protest at the State Capitol, Sacramento, CA

The Tea Party is composed of the large portion of the American electorate that is dissatisfied with the established political order. Tea Partiers see themselves as mainstream Americans that have been forgotten by the political elite. The political elite is defined by Rasmussen and Schoen as a self-selecting group of influencers from business, government, academia, and the media who occupy the most prestigious institutional positions in American society and in power centers in Washington. Tea Party members see the leadership of both the Democrats and the Republicans as members of the political elite, and think that both parties have let the American people down. The Tea Party is made up of voters who believe that the voter has lost its say, and want the electorate to be let back into the decision-making process. The main principles that unite Tea Party supporters are fiscal responsibility, limited government, and a strict adherence to the original meaning of the Constitution. A call for fiscal responsibility is a call for the government to have a balanced budget, meaning that government spending cannot exceed government revenue, so as to avoid a budget deficit. The principle of limited government means that the work of the government should be constrained by the powers designated to it in the U.S. Constitution and that it should be less involved with the everyday lives of Americans. Strict adherence to the original meaning of the Constitution, commonly referred to as strict construction, entails an

attempt to determine precisely what the Founding Fathers intended when writing the document in 1787 and strictly following the Constitution according to that understanding of it. This set of simple principles has the ability to mobilize a wide range of the electorate that may disagree on some issues, but can agree on those core ideals. Rasmussen and Schoen explain that the Tea Party is composed of three distinct groups: 1) political newcomers who have been mobilized by a spontaneous and significant degree of outrage with the status quo, 2) independents who feel betrayed by both the Republicans and Democrats for the government's current state, and 3) core Republicans who feel like they no longer have a home in the modern Republican Party.

Do you consider yourself to be [a supporter of the Tea Party movement, an opponent of the Tea Party movement], or neither?



Source: Gallup, January 31, 2011

The Tea Party is a very unique movement in American political history. While in some ways it is similar to other third parties in history, the Tea Party is different in many ways as well. One way that it is different is in the way that it is organized. There is no central leadership for the Tea Party, and there is no central party headquarters. The power of the movement remains in the local Tea Party organizations. The Tea Party has already obtained the level of support needed to be a politically viable third party. Despite this support, it is not clear whether the Tea Partiers want to be a third party. A March 2010 study by the Sam Adams Alliance revealed that 86 percent of Tea Party supporters oppose the formation of a third party. Rather than forming a third party, the Tea Party has instead turned to driving the direction and the agenda of the Republican Party towards Tea Party ideals. Tea Party politicians are predominantly members of the Republican Party. For example, there is now a Tea Party Caucus in both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, but the Caucuses in both the Senate and the House are composed entirely of members of the Republican Party.

This dynamic has raised significant concerns within the Tea Party that the Republican Party will try and co-opt the Tea Party message. Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who is strongly supported by the Tea Party, refused to join the Tea Party caucus in the Senate because he thought that it would ruin what the Tea Party stands for. "Really what I think the strength of the Tea Party is that it comes from the grass roots," said Rubio, "That's the strength of the Tea Party: that it's not a political organization run by people out of Washington. My concern is a Tea Party caucus could intrude on that."

Party Affiliation of Tea Party Supporters

<i>Democrat</i>	4%
<i>Republican</i>	44%
<i>Independent</i>	52%

Source: CNN Poll, February 2010

The Tea Party was a force to be reckoned with in the 2010 midterm elections, and its influence will certainly still be present in the 2012 elections. Not only did Tea Party candidates find success in the 2010 midterm elections, but the Tea Party was also a crucial ground-level political force that mobilized many new voters that helped elect Republican candidates across the country. The rise of the Tea Party can also cause a lot of problems for the Republicans by attracting voters away from the Republicans. A February 2010 CNN Poll showed that more Tea Party supporters identified themselves as Republicans than Democrats, meaning that a Tea Party candidate would likely draw votes away from Republicans only. They also conducted polls to directly illustrate this point. When respondents were asked in a generic ballot test whether they planned to vote for a Democrat or a Republican in the upcoming 2010 elections, it was a tie at 46 percent. When a Tea Party candidate was thrown into the mix, the Democrat came out on top by 14 percent because 16 percent of the respondents said that they would support the Tea Party.

2010 Generic Ballot Test, Democrat or Republican?

<i>Democrat</i>	46%
<i>Republican</i>	46%

2010 Generic Ballot Test, Democrat, Republican, or Tea Party?

<i>Democrat</i>	46%
<i>Republican</i>	32%
<i>Tea Party</i>	16%

Source: CNN Poll, February 2010

The Tea Party has been effective in molding the agenda of the Republican Party since the 2010 elections. The Tea Party is shaping the national debate. In a study conducted by the Sam Adams Alliance, Tea Party supporters were asked what issue they considered to be “very important,” and 92 percent said the “budget.” The growth of the Tea Party forced the two parties to focus on spending and managing the country’s massive deficit. The budget has now become the central issue in the American political arena. The overwhelming support for the Tea Party has forced the political establishment to address the Tea Party grievances. The political elite that the Tea Party viewed as unresponsive to their needs are now being forced to provide answers to the Tea Party’s questions.

Given the movement’s unpredictable growth since February 2009 and the broad support that the movement has already obtained, it is hard to say what the future will hold for the Tea Party. The Tea Party movement has completely transformed the political landscape from what it was just a few years ago. In just two years, the Tea Party has become a movement that makes its voice heard and also has the ability to influence policy. The rise of the Tea Party not only has changed the American political landscape, but it also has shown the power that grassroots movements can have in the future of American politics.

Sources

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<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/01/26/2035128/sen-marco-rubio-says-tea-party.html#ixzz1FCPEhQLv>

Thomson, Alex, A Glossary of US Politics & Government

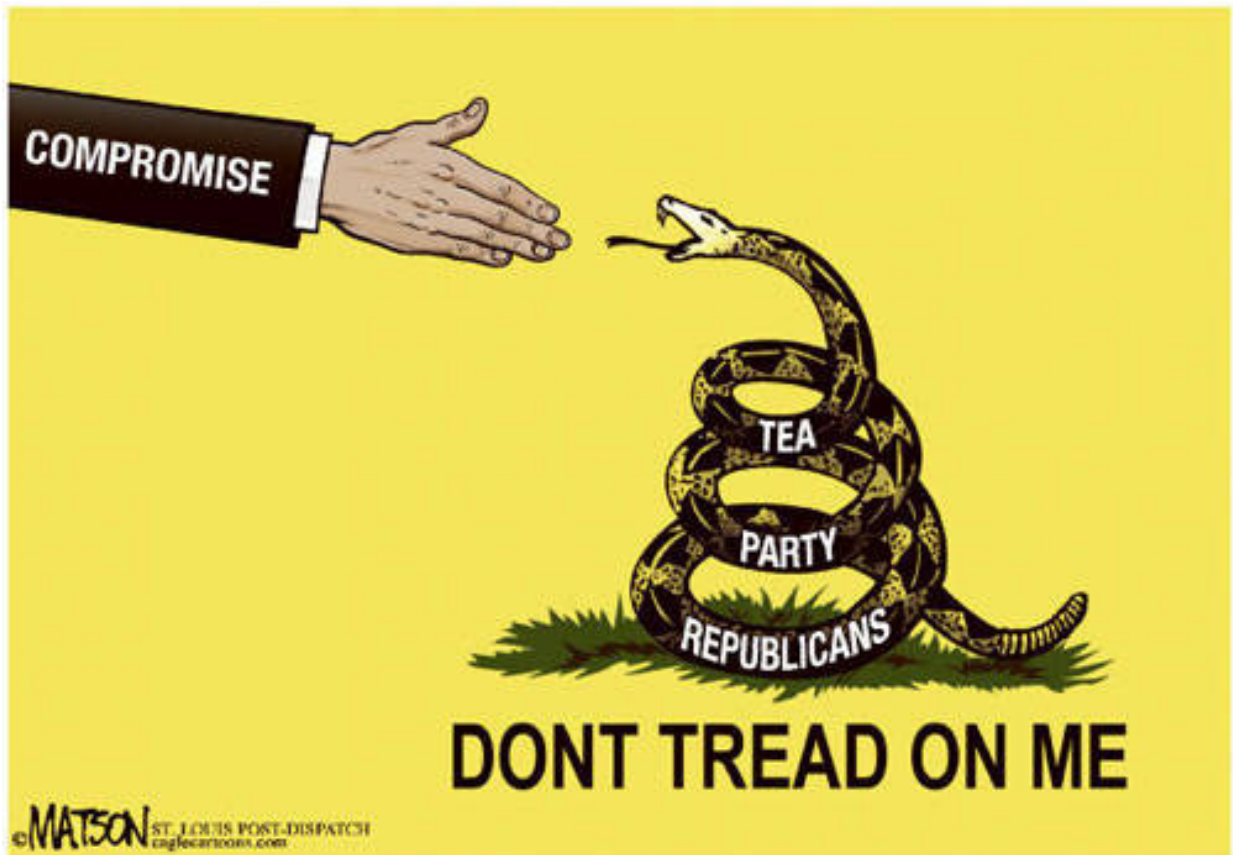
The Tea Set



Chattanooga Times Free Press Bennett

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Don't Compromise on Me!



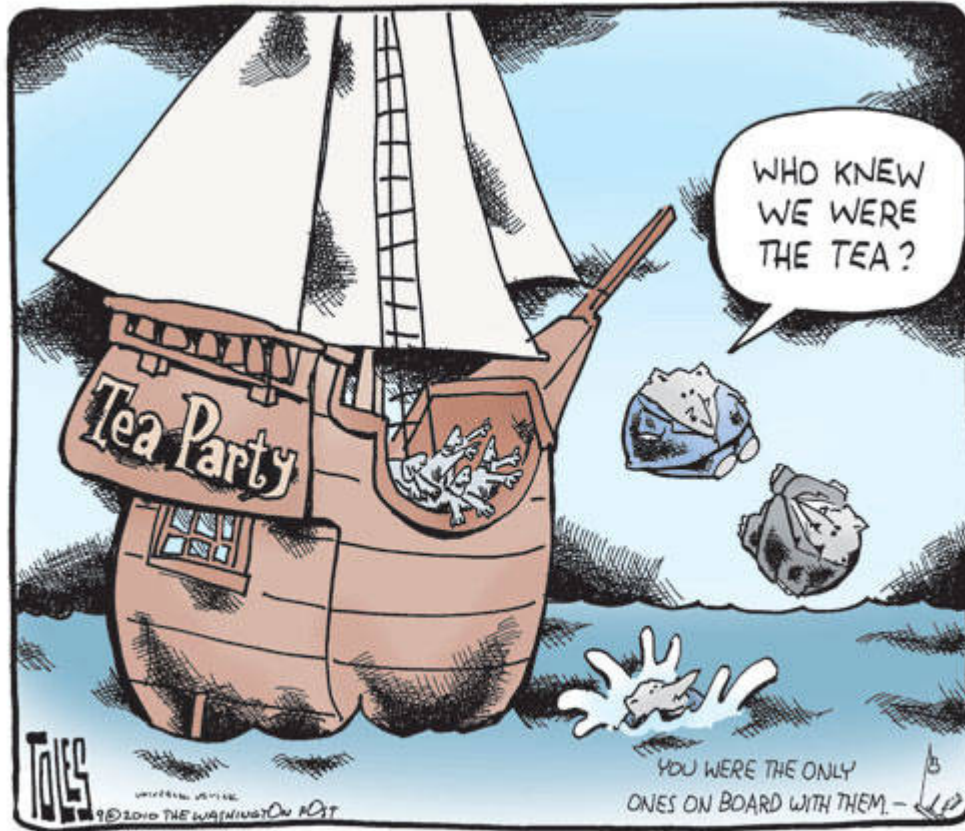
<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/politicalcartoons/ig/Tea-Party-Cartoons/Don-t-Compromise-on-Me.htm>

Marriage Proposal



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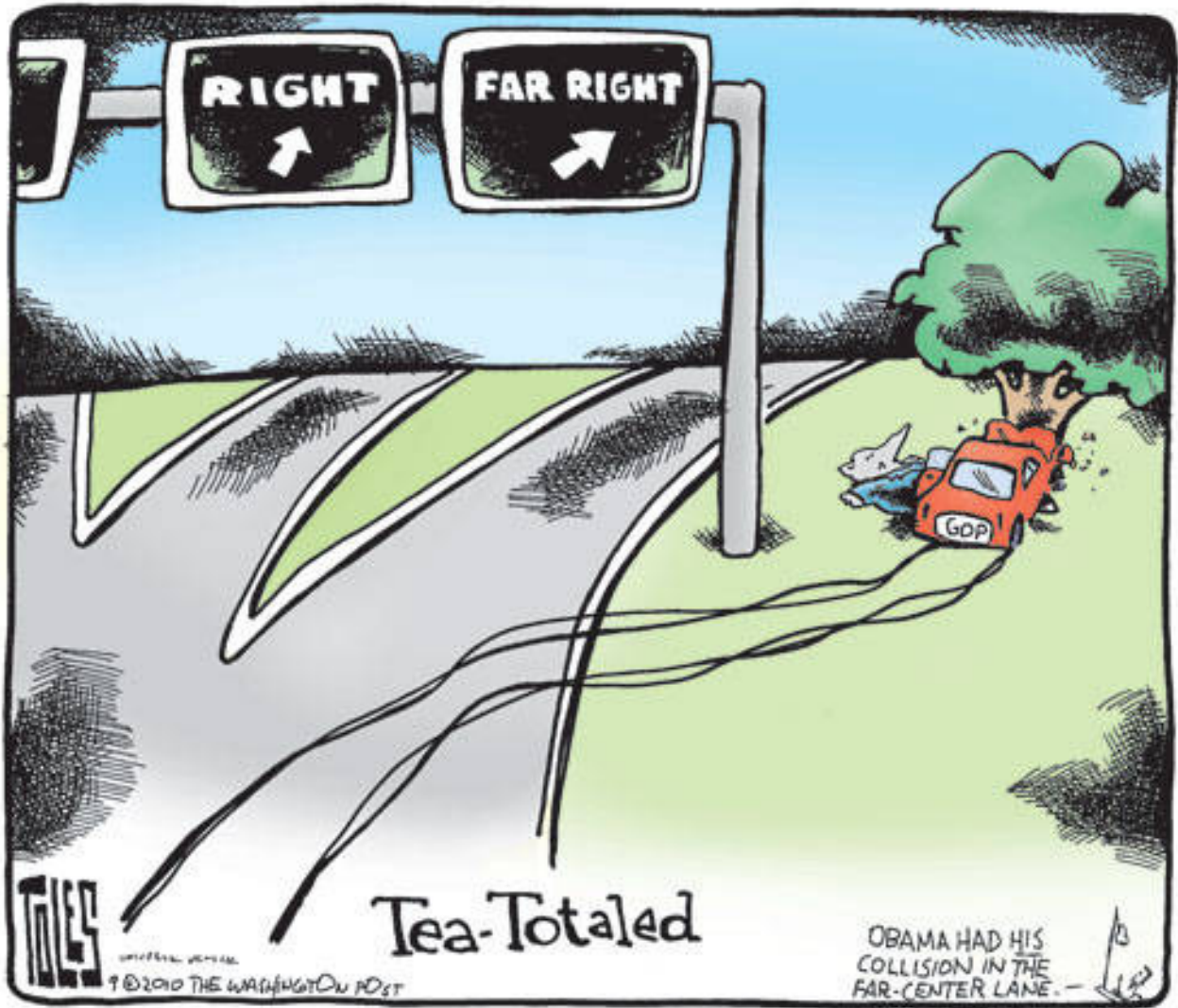
Tea Party Overthrows the GOP



9-17-10

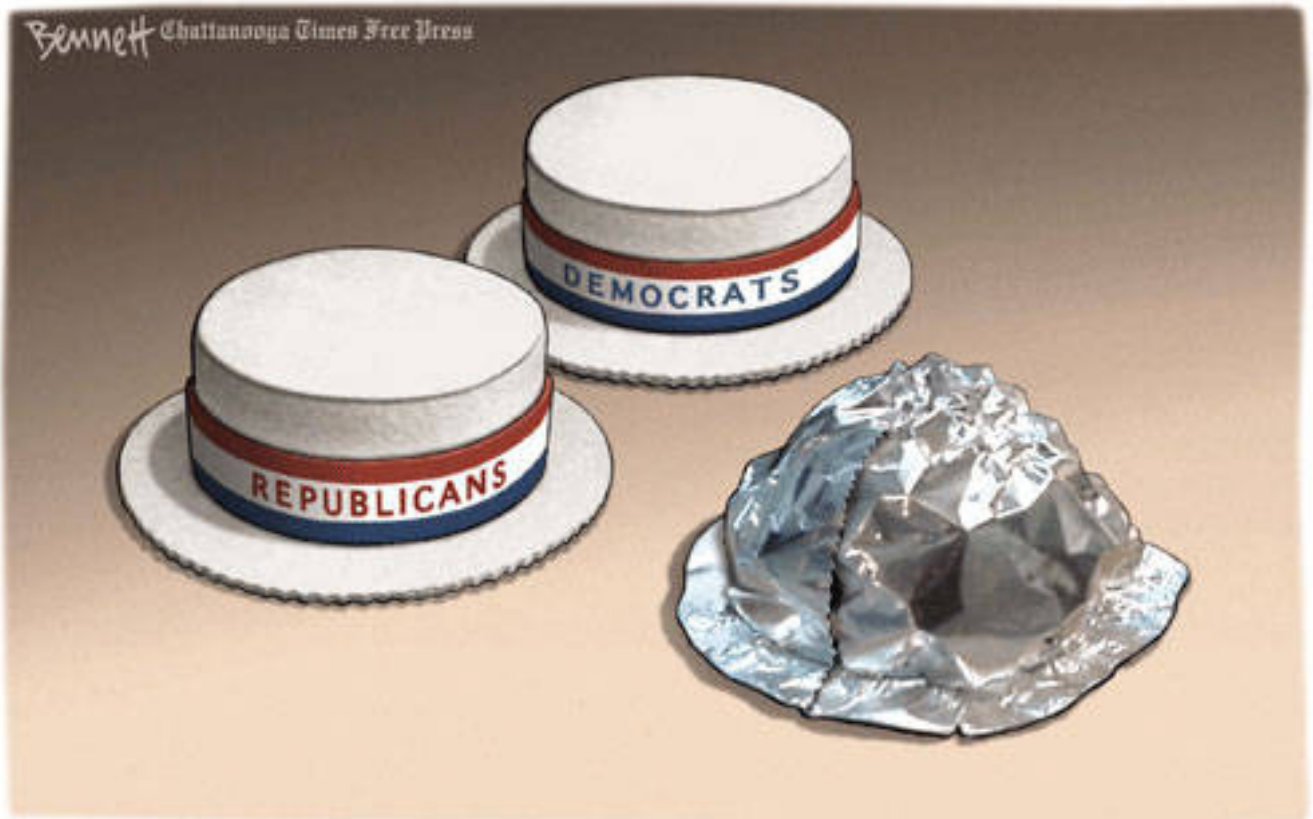
<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/politicalcartoons/ig/Tea-Party-Cartoons/Tea-Party-Overthrows-GOP.htm>

Tea Totalled



<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/politicalcartoons/ig/Tea-Party-Cartoons/Tea-Totalled.htm>

Hat in the Ring



The Tea Party throws its (tin foil) hat into the ring.

<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/politicalcartoons/ig/Tea-Party-Cartoons/Tea-Party-Tin-Foil-Hat.1-NX.htm>

Tea Party: Third Party or Powerful Movement

Research at least five current news stories on the Tea Party movement in the United States. Quote evidence from the stories that supports the idea of the Tea Party as a true political party or a political movement, likely to fall apart once their issues have been adopted by one of the major political parties.

Quote	Source	Third Party or movement

Based on my evidence I believe the Tea Party is....



Designing a Message: Third Parties T-Shirt

Directions: Based on your knowledge of third parties and your examination of the Tea Party currently influencing American politics, you are to design a t-shirt that communicates your belief that the Tea Party is or will become a true third party or that it will remain a movement that will be absorbed by one of the two other parties.

Characteristic	Possible Points	Points Earned
Slogan clearly asserts that the Tea Party is a party or movement		
Design or text explains why the artist thinks it is a party/movement		
Identifies at least one of the issues that the Tea Party is concerned with		
Uses words/images in a creative way to emphasize the message		
Comments:		

Third Parties: Barriers & Challenges

Small Group Activity

Documents:

1. *Third Party and Independent Presidential Candidates Receiving 5% or More of Popular Vote*
2. *Signature Requirements for a New Party to Get on the Ballot*
3. *Commission on Presidential Debates' Nonpartisan Candidate Selection Criteria for 2004 General Election Debate Participation*
4. *Open Debates Files FEC Complaint Against the Commission on Presidential Debates*

Directions: The four documents you have received shed light on the issue of third parties and their inability to run a candidate for president that can win. Using information gleaned from the documents; address the following questions (each group member must write her/his own responses):

1. According to the table 12.1 on Third Parties and the popular vote, identify two candidates who received a significant % of the popular vote as well as significant electoral votes, and provide an explanation of this outcome.
2. Using data from “Signature Requirements for a New Party to Get on the Ballot” as well as information from your textbook, discuss how Third Parties in the United States, unlike in most other countries, face significant difficulties in getting on the ballot for the general election. Explain why this occurs and its impact on American presidential elections.
3. According to the eligibility criteria established by the CPD and the *Open Debate* article on Nader’s attempt to reform the rules of the Commission on Presidential Debates, how do the current rules discriminate against third party candidates?
4. Using all of your sources including your knowledge of U.S. politics, brainstorm a list of institutional and financial barriers faced by third parties. How do these barriers affect the campaigns of third parties?

Third-Party and Independent Presidential Candidates Receiving 5 Percent or More of Popular Vote

Ross Perot (Reform Party)	1996	8.5	0
Ross Perot (Independent)	1992	18.9	0
John B. Anderson (Independent)	1980	6.6	0
George C. Wallace (American Independent)	1968	13.5	46
Robert M. LaFollette (Progressive)	1924	16.6	13
Theodore Roosevelt (Bull Moose)	1912	27.4	88
Eugene V. Debs (Socialist)	1912	6.0	0
James B. Weaver (Populist)	1892	8.5	22
John C. Brekinridge (Southern Democrat)	1860	18.1	72
John Bell (Constitutional Union)	1860	12.6	39
Millard Fillmore (Whig American)	1856	21.5	8
Martin Van Buren (Free Soil)	1848	10.1	0
William Wirt (Anti-Masonic)	1832	7.8	7

Source: Rebecca Small, Advanced Placement Institute: U.S. Government & Politics, the College of William and Mary

Signature Requirements for a New Party to Get on the Ballot

United States	5,141,472 total	NO
Australia	0	YES
Austria	2,600 total	YES
Belgium	200-400 per candidate*	YES
Canada	25-100 per candidate	YES
Croatia	0	YES
Finland	0	YES
France	0	YES
Germany	200 per candidate	YES****
Great Britain	0	YES
Greece	0	YES
Ireland	0	YES
New Zealand	2 per candidate	YES
Norway	0	YES
Poland	75,000 total	YES
Portugal	5,000 total**	YES
Spain	0	YES
Sweden	0	YES
Switzerland	2,500-10,000 total	YES
The Netherlands	190 total	YES

* Or three signatures from sitting members of parliament

** This is a one time only requirement

*** If a party has elected one Member of Parliament, no signatures are required.

Source: Rebecca Small, Advanced Placement Institute: U.S. Government & Politics, the College of William and Mary.

Candidate Selection Process

Commission on Presidential Debates' Nonpartisan Candidate Selection Criteria for 2004 General Election Debate Participation

The CPD's nonpartisan criteria for selecting candidates to participate in its 2004 general election presidential debates are:

1. Evidence of Constitutional Eligibility

The CPD's first criterion requires satisfaction of the eligibility requirements of Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution. The requirements are satisfied if the candidate is:

- a. At least 35 years of age.
- b. A Natural Born Citizen of the United States and a resident of the United States for fourteen years.
- c. Otherwise eligible under the Constitution.

2. Evidence of Ballot Access

The CPD's second criterion requires that the candidate qualify to have his/her name appear on enough state ballots to have at least a mathematical chance of securing an Electoral College majority in the 2004 general election. Under the Constitution, the candidate who receives a majority of votes in the Electoral College, at least 270 votes, is elected President regardless of the popular vote.

3. Indicators of Electoral Support

The CPD's third criterion requires that the candidate have a level of support of at least 15% (fifteen percent) of the national electorate as determined by five selected national public opinion polling organizations, using the average of those organizations' most recent publicly reported results at the time of the determination.

Open Debates Files FEC Complaint Against the Commission on Presidential Debates

2/19/2004

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Today, Open Debates filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) against the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD). The complaint contains previously unreleased, secret documents that reveal how the major party candidates collude with the CPD to dictate the terms of the presidential debates and exclude third-party and independent challengers.

"FEC regulations require presidential debate sponsors that accept corporate contributions to be 'nonpartisan' and to employ 'pre-established objective' candidate selection criteria. The CPD, which accepts millions of dollars in corporate contributions, fails to stage the debates in accordance with these FEC regulations," said Open Debates' Executive Director George Farah.

The complaint alleges that presidential debates sponsored by the CPD are controlled by the major parties in violation of FEC debate regulations.

The complaint further alleges that the CPD was created by the Republican and Democratic parties, for the Republican and Democratic parties. The CPD exists to secretly award control of the presidential debates to the Republican and Democratic nominees. Questions concerning third-party participation and debate formats are resolved behind closed doors, between negotiators for the Republican and Democratic candidates. These negotiators draft secret debate contracts called Memoranda of Understanding that dictate precisely how the debates will be run - - from decreeing who can participate, to prohibiting candidate-to-candidate questioning, to stipulating the height of the podiums. Posing as an independent sponsor, the CPD implements the directives of the Memoranda of Understanding, shielding the major party candidates from public criticism. Many of these issues are documented in the forthcoming book *No Debate* (Seven Stories Press) authored by Open Debates' Executive Director George Farah.

The complaint requests that the FEC prohibit the CPD from staging future corporate-sponsored presidential debates.

"The CPD has sold out the American people; vital issues which need to be examined by the discerning voter have been suppressed," said Paul Weyrich, Chairman of the Free Congress Foundation.

"The major party candidates can openly hold exclusionary and stilted pseudo-debates if they want to, but to do so under the rubric of nonpartisanship is an unacceptable lie that gravely damages our democracy," said Ambassador Alan Keyes.

"Under the CPD's control, presidential debates have devolved into artificial news conferences, where the major party candidates merely recite prepackaged sound-bites and avoid discussing many important issues," said Kert Davies, research director of Greenpeace USA.

"A nonpartisan Citizens' Debate Commission should replace the CPD," said Rob Richie, executive director of the Center for Voting and Democracy.

Open Debates is a non-partisan organization that works to make the presidential debates serve the American people first. Along with over fifty other civic organizations it has established a non-partisan Citizens' Debate Commission, led by 17 national civic leaders, to replace the CPD. The Citizens' Debate Commission will sponsor real presidential debates that are rigorous, fair, and inclusive of important issues and popular candidates.

FEC Complaint: <http://www.opendebates.org/news/pressreleases/FEC.html>

No Debate: <http://www.sevenstories.com/Book/index.cfm?GCOI=58322100234970>

<http://www.usnewswire.com/>

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Source: <http://www.g0lem.net/PhpWiki/index.php/OpenDebates?PHPSESSID=8eb39c22d3e353d29f770e028582c286>

Third-Party Candidates in Presidential and Non-Presidential Elections

(Last updated October 1, 2002)

Third-party candidates have always had a difficult time winning definitive success on the presidential level due in part to a variety of structural and political factors, but have gained some ground in recent years in other kinds of elections. No third-presidential candidate has won any electoral votes since the 1960s, but third-party candidates have won a handful of governorships and other high posts in recent decades. As of early 2002, there were two governors, one Senator, and one member of the House of Representatives who were not affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican parties.

Presidential Elections and Obstacles to Third-Party Success

While most presidential campaigns revolve around the two leading parties' candidates, third-party candidates have been a mainstay of the election season and have sometimes taken on significance in setting the political agenda and even affecting the overall result. Third-party presidential candidates have won more than 5 percent of the popular vote in 13 elections, more than 20 percent in two elections, and some of the electoral votes actually needed to become president in eight elections.

Third parties and third-party candidates cover a wide spectrum; there were at least 13 candidates in the 1992 election, at least 23 candidates in 1996, and at least 17 candidates in the 2000 election, though only Ross Perot and Ralph Nader won more than 1 percent of the popular vote in any of these elections. Nevertheless, they have been grouped loosely by political scientist James Q. Wilson into four categories: (1) ideological parties such as the Socialist Labor Party on one end and the Libertarian Party on the other, (2) one-issue parties such as the still-going Prohibition Party and the anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s, (3) economic protest parties such as the Populists at the beginning of the 20th century, and (4) factional parties that organize in protest of a major party's presidential candidate. Additionally, a study by Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus concluded that prominent third-party presidential campaigns in the 19th century were primarily about an established political party that offered an alternative to the main two parties of the time, and prominent third-party presidential campaigns in the 20th century have been more centered on a particular individual candidate.

Some recent examples of prominent third-party candidates include :

- Ross Perot (Reform Party). A Texas billionaire with no experience in government, Perot captured public attention during the 1992 election for his focus on the budget deficit and his promises to bring his corporate successes to the White House. Perot participated in three presidential debates against Bill Clinton and George H. Bush, and won about 18 percent of the popular vote (studies have shown that Clinton probably would have still won had Perot not run, though Perot did cost Clinton a majority of the popular vote). Perot ran again in 1996 but with less success; he was not invited to participate in the presidential debates between Clinton and Bob Dole, and won about 8.4 percent of the vote.
- Ralph Nader (Green Party). A long-time consumer advocate, Nader first ran in 1996 with a

nominal campaign but became a more active candidate in 2000, saying that he was both criticizing the Democratic Party as well as trying to build the Green Party as a viable and stable third-party. Nader won about 2 percent of the popular vote in 2000.

- Representative John Anderson of Illinois (National Unity Campaign). Originally a moderate Republican, Anderson dropped out of the 1980 Republican primary in favor of Ronald Reagan, but continued his campaign as an independent candidate. He participated in one presidential debate with Reagan (Carter refused to debate Anderson), and won about 6 percent of the popular vote.
- Governor George Wallace (American Independent Party). The last third-party candidate to win any electoral votes, Wallace split from the Democratic Party to run a campaign against the extension of civil rights and in favor of the Vietnam War. He had strong results in the South and won 13.5 percent of the popular vote and 48 electoral seats. Wallace subsequently returned to the Democratic Party.

Third-party candidates face several obstacles to success. Beyond voters' loyalty to a particular major party and voters' choosing simply to not vote rather than to seek out an alternative, third-party candidates face several structural obstacles, some of which are discussed below.

- **Electoral College system.** The electoral-college system of voting allocates electoral votes based on the states where one has taken a plurality of the popular vote, so this system disadvantages third-party candidates with a broad base of support and favors those candidates with strong regional support. Thus, Ross Perot could win 19 percent of the popular vote in 1992 without winning a single state or electoral vote, while States' Rights nominee Strom Thurmond took 7.3 percent of the electoral vote in 1948 while winning only 2.4 percent of the popular vote. For more on the Electoral College, go here. [Can't.](#)
- **Public financing of presidential campaigns.** Under the Presidential Public Funding Program, a third-party candidate receives funds for his or her campaign only after proving some success in a presidential election. If a party's candidate wins five percent of the popular vote, that party will receive some post-election reimbursement and then will get some funding automatically in the next election, which is why Ralph Nader of the Green Party wanted to win at least five percent of the vote in 2000 and why Pat Buchanan sought the Reform Party's nomination that same year.
- **Ballot access laws.** Third-party candidates must establish organizations and efforts to get themselves and their parties on the ballots in most if not all of the states. Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy's 1976 independent campaign was noteworthy for successfully challenging many states' ballot access laws, even though he ultimately took less than 1 percent of the popular vote.
- **Participation in events such as presidential debates.** Since 1988, presidential debates have been organized by the Commission on Presidential Debates, a non-partisan organization that invites candidates to a series of debates based on pre-established criteria. The Commission's criteria has been criticized for setting overly high standards for third-party candidate participation; for example, Ross Perot was invited in 1992 at the request of the Clinton and Bush campaigns, but was not invited in 1996. For more on debates, go here.
- **Fears of a deadlock.** If no presidential candidate wins a plurality of the electoral vote, then such a presidential election would be decided by the House of Representatives in a special, complicated procedure by which all the newly-elected representatives vote as state

delegations, and an absolute majority of state delegations is needed for election. Ross Perot himself raised the possibility of a deadlock to help explain why he briefly decided to drop out of the 1992 presidential election, though he did re-enter subsequently.

Non-Presidential Elections

Third-party candidates have had more definitive success in non-presidential elections, in part because candidates can sometimes win by taking a plurality of the popular vote, rather than having to win a majority of the electoral vote, and because they can focus on a smaller pool of potential voters. Still, there have no more than two third-party governors at the same time since the 1960s, no more than two third-party Senators since the 1940s, and no more than one or two third-party members of the House of Representatives since the 1940s.

As of 2002, before the November elections, the only third party elected officials at high federal or state positions were:

- **Federal**
 - **U.S. Senate (1 out of 100)** : James Jeffords of Vermont (who switched from the Republican party to independent status in May 2001, throwing control of the Senate back to the Democratic Party)
 - **U.S. House of Representatives (1 out of 435)** : Bernard Sanders of Vermont.
- **State**
 - **Governors (2 out of 50)** : Jesse Ventura (Minnesota Reform Party, Minnesota) and Angus S. King Jr., (Independent, Maine)
 - **State Senates** : only two out of 50 states had any third-party state senators. Maine had 1 out of 35 seats and Minnesota had 3 out of 67; none of Nevada's state senators are party-affiliated.
 - **State Houses** : only five out of 49 states with a state house had any third-party members. Georgia had 1 out of 180 seats, Maine had 1 out of 151, New Hampshire had 2 out of 400, Vermont had 5 out of 150, and Virginia had 2 out of 100. Nebraska does not have a state house.

Sources

Information on the pre-election 2002 partisan composition of the U.S. Senate is available via the Senate on-line here, on the U.S. House of Representatives here, on state governors via the National Governors' Association here, and on state legislatures via the National Conference of State Legislatures here. Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America* (Princeton University Press, 1996, second edition). *Selecting the President: from 1789 to 1996* (Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1997). Micah L. Sifry, *Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America* (Routledge, 2002). Some information on the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections is available via the Federal Election Commission, on-line here.

<http://www.newsaic.com/mwparties.html> - top

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