



U.S. Government: How It Works ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Introduction

This Instructor's Guide provides information to help you get the most out of *Elections and Political Parties*, part of the six-part series *U.S. Government: How It Works*. The contents of the guide will allow you to prepare your students before using the program and to present follow-up activities to reinforce the program's key learning points.

While the complexities of the American political system have never been greater, the right visual aid can help students sift through them — and even develop a passion for the subject. The six-part series *U.S. Government: How It Works* is an ideal tool for introducing and exploring key aspects of U.S. government and public policy. Using a combination of eye-catching graphics, dynamic video footage, and interviews with legal and political scholars, each episode celebrates a particular dimension of American democracy while equipping students to candidly discuss political issues. The series includes:

- *The Legislative Branch*
- *The Executive Branch*
- *The Judicial Branch*
- *The Constitution and Foundations of Government*
- *Elections and Political Parties*
- *Citizenship and Civic Responsibilities*

Program Summary

A government of the people, by the people, and for the people isn't possible without the laborious process of nominating and electing candidates, in a manner fair and free to all citizens. How did this process begin and how has it evolved over the course of American history? Does it even remotely resemble — for better or for worse — the manner in which the Founding Fathers gained high office? Using the 2000 election of George W. Bush and the uncertainties it exposed in the American electoral process as a departure point, this program examines how political parties were started, and why;

methods and campaigns that were launched to elect different Presidents to office; and the history of voting and the Constitutional amendments that made voting possible for all Americans.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will understand:

- The role of political parties and third party candidates
- The history of political parties in the U.S.
- The ways in which political campaigns have changed since the 18th century
- Primary elections, conventions, and the electoral college
- Voting, Amendment 24, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Main Topics

Section 1: Introduction

The program begins with a brief look at the contentious presidential election of 2000, in which George W. Bush was declared the victor over Al Gore more than a month after voters had gone to the polls.

Section 2: Political Parties

This section covers the history of political parties in the U.S., tracing the evolution of the Democratic and Republican parties back to the split between the Federalists and their opponents; and the role of third party candidates, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Ross Perot, and Ralph Nader.

Section 3: Presidential Campaigns

The process of electing a president has come a long way since the era of George Washington. This section describes the first campaign that was personality-driven and the first to spotlight “family,” as well as the technologically up-to-date media blitz of today’s candidates.

Section 4: Elections and Voting

The final section touches on primary elections, conventions, the electoral college, requirements for voting, voting rights and the poll tax, and local and other types of elections.

Fast Facts

- American women fought hard for the right to vote. Those who had joined the suffrage movement were spit upon, jeered, beaten, fined, and jailed, and subjected to conditions and abuses in prison that were just short of torture. The women were called unpatriotic and accused of undermining national interest. Many people, both in positions of power and the average person, reacted with violent displeasure to the idea of women casting a vote. Most American women gained the right to vote in 1920.
- Native Americans and African-Americans did not gain the unrestricted right to vote in federal elections until 1964, when the last of the unfair “poll taxes” used to keep them from voting was banned with the passage of Amendment 24. The poll tax was a fee that had to be paid before voting, and it stopped many poor people of all races from participation in the election process. It took a Supreme Court ruling in 1966 for all poll taxes, for both state and federal elections, to be officially declared unconstitutional.
- One of the duties granted to the House of Representatives is the power to elect the president if there is a deadlock in the electoral college. None of the four nominees in the 1824 presidential election had enough electoral votes to actually win, so Speaker of the House Henry Clay elected John Quincy Adams as President — in spite of the fact that Adams had received fewer electoral and popular votes than opponent Andrew Jackson. Clay and Adams were accused of striking a “corrupt bargain,” but many modern analysts now believe that this choice really did represent the wishes of the people, due to the intricacies of the vote having been split among four candidates.
- In the 2000 presidential election, Al Gore won the popular vote, but George W. Bush won the electoral vote, after a recount of Florida’s 25 electoral votes, and the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court case. After his defeat, Al Gore went on to win an Academy Award, a Grammy, and the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as an environmental activist.
- The Electoral College was an idea that was first discussed at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and grew out of a concern for the fairness of elections. In the 18th century, America’s population was mostly scattered, with some concentrated population areas. The Founders feared that most voters wouldn’t know enough about both candidates to make an informed decision and therefore would simply pick the one they knew best. A direct popular vote might give an unfair advantage to candidates from states that were densely populated. The Electoral College seemed to be a solution to this problem — although the idea of abolishing the Electoral College has been debated for nearly 50 years!

- In the first years after the Revolutionary War, the country was unified under one leader, President George Washington. This political harmony would not last. Soon after he took office, the members of Washington's cabinet were so polarized in their opinions that they eventually formed political parties to assert their own viewpoints on the complex issues facing the new country. The Federalist Party, founded by Alexander Hamilton, was established at this time. It was one of America's first political parties.
- During the era of George Washington and the Founding Fathers, campaigning for public office was frowned upon. The political scene was small and exclusive, and those involved nominated those among their peers who they thought were best qualified for office. It wasn't until Andrew Jackson ran for president in 1828 that a true political campaign first took shape. Jackson decided to appeal directly to the voters, holding rallies and parades. By the 1950's, campaigns had evolved to showcase not just the candidate, but his family as well, as Dwight Eisenhower's wife and children accompanied him on the campaign trail.
- In the 1990s, four different states elected third party or independent governors, including Minnesota, which elected former pro wrestler Jesse Ventura to office in 1999. In 1992, H. Ross Perot, a billionaire businessman from Texas, ran against George Bush and Bill Clinton as the Reform Party candidate, gaining more than 19 million votes.
- Third party presidential candidate (he's run for that office four times) Ralph Nader has a long history of consumer advocacy. His 1965 bestseller *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* was a direct challenge to the auto industry. The furor caused by the book led to the creation of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and to the mandating of safety features such as seat belts and stronger windshields. Nader is the founder of dozens of nonprofit organizations (including the Public Interest Research Group [PIRG]) concerned with health, environmental, economic, and other issues. While often criticized for "splitting the vote" in the 2000 presidential election, Nader's supporters felt he took a necessary stand against the monopoly of a two-party system.

Vocabulary Terms

Cabinet: An advisory body to the president, consisting of the heads of the 15 executive departments of the federal government. Cabinet officers are called “secretaries” (except for the Postmaster General and the Attorney General).

caucus: A meeting of members of a political party that gather to discuss and choose convention delegates. In some states, a caucus is held instead of a primary election.

checks and balances: The powers conferred on each of the three branches of government by which each restrains the others from exerting too much power. Judicial review is an example of checks and balances.

Commander-in-Chief: The role of the United States president as highest ranking officer in the armed forces.

Constitution of the United States: “The supreme law of the land,” it is the document that embodies the fundamental laws and principles of the United States. Drafted at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and ratified by the required nine states in 1788, the document replaced the Articles of Confederation and went into effect on March 4, 1789. It consists of the preamble, seven articles, and 27 amendments (which were added later). It established a new federal republic, granting certain powers to the national government while reserving other powers to the states.

Constitution Party: A conservative American political party, founded as the U.S. Taxpayers’ Party in 1992. Some state affiliate parties are known under different names. The party stated goal is “to restore our government to its Constitutional limits and our law to its Biblical foundations.”

delegate: A person designated to act for or represent another or others, as in a political convention.

Democratic Party: One of the two major political parties in the United States, owing its origin to a split in the Democratic-Republican Party under Andrew Jackson in 1828.

Democratic-Republican Party: An American political party that was opposed to the Federalist Party and was founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1792 and dissolved in 1828.

elector: A member of the electoral college.

Electoral College: A body of electors chosen by the voters in each state to elect the President and Vice President.

electoral vote: The vote cast in the electoral college by the representatives of each state in a presidential election.

executive branch: The branch of federal and state government responsible for implementing, supporting, and enforcing the laws made by the legislative branch and interpreted by the judicial branch.

Federalist Party: An American political party founded in 1787 to advocate the establishment of a strong federal government and the adoption by the states of the Constitution. The Federalist party gained prominence in the 1790s under the leadership of Alexander Hamilton.

general election: A regularly scheduled local, state, or national election in which voters elect office-holders.

Green Party: A worldwide, liberal political party focusing on environmental issues. The Green Party of the United States was formed in 2001, though it had existed in various forms (especially as a state party) for several decades.

judicial branch: The court systems of local, state, and federal governments, responsible for interpreting the laws passed by the legislative branch and enforced by the executive branch.

legislative branch: The branch of federal and state government empowered to make the laws that are then enforced by the executive branch and interpreted by the judicial branch. The legislative branch consists of Congress (the Senate, and the House of Representatives) and the fifty state legislatures.

Libertarian Party: An American political party founded in 1971. Hundreds of Libertarian candidates have been elected or appointed to public office. The party's motto is "Smaller government, lower taxes, more freedom."

New Deal: A group of government programs and policies established under President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s; the New Deal was designed to improve conditions for persons suffering in the Great Depression. These included banking reform laws, emergency relief programs, and agricultural programs. Several New Deal programs remain active, including the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Federal Housing Administration, and the Social Security Administration.

Oath of Office: An affirmation required by the Constitution before a newly-elected President takes office.

Oval Office: An oval-shaped room in the White House that serves as the official office of the President.

poll tax: A fee that must be paid before voting, used to keep African Americans from voting. The poll tax was outlawed in 1964.

popular vote: The vote for a U.S. presidential candidate made by the qualified voters, as opposed to that made by the electoral college.

primary elections: A preliminary election in which voters of each party nominate candidates for office.

Progressive Party: A U.S. political party that was organized by Republican insurgents in 1911 and supported the presidential candidacy of Theodore Roosevelt in 1912. Also called Bull Moose Party.

Reform Party: The Reform Party of the United States of America (abbreviated Reform Party USA or RPUSA), an American political party founded by Ross Perot in 1996. The party has nominated centrist candidates like Ross Perot, conservatives like Pat Buchanan, and progressives like Ralph Nader. Its biggest victory came when Jesse Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota in 1998.

republic: A country in which the power rests in the body of citizens permitted to vote and the representatives they choose. A republic is a form of government in which the head of state is not a monarch.

Republican Party: One of the two major political parties in the United States, organized in 1854 to oppose the extension of slavery.

Secretary of State: The head of the United States Department of State, concerned with foreign affairs. The Secretary is a member of the President's Cabinet and is the highest-ranking cabinet secretary both in line of succession and order of precedence.

Speaker of the House: The presiding officer of the House of Representatives. The Speaker is second in line, after the vice president, in succession to the presidency. In 2007 Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House.

third parties: Political parties organized in addition to the existing parties in a two-party system.

veto: The power of a president or governor to reject a bill proposed by a legislature by refusing to sign it into law.

Voting Rights Act of 1965: Legislation that banned the use of discriminatory practices such as literacy tests as a requirement to vote.

West Wing: Part of the White House Complex, it is the building housing the official offices of the President.

White House Complex: The four principal structures and the adjoining outdoor ceremonial areas which serve as the seat of the executive branch of government. The structures are the Executive Residence (where the First Family lives); the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (houses the executive offices of the President and Vice President); the West Wing (the location of the Oval Office, Cabinet Room, and Roosevelt Room); and the East Wing (houses the office of the First Lady, White House Social Secretary, and provides public access to the State Rooms of the Executive Residence for tours and social events).

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. How many different political parties can you name?
2. Do you think the media affects the outcome of nominations and elections?
3. When you're 18, do you plan to vote in presidential elections? Gubernatorial? Local elections, such as for mayor, school board, or city council?
4. Have presidential campaigns been conducted in the same way throughout American history? Has technology changed the essential nature of campaigns and elections? Do you think the focus of campaigns (e.g., issues, personal morals of the candidates, etc.) has changed any over time?
5. Do you think it's wrong for a third-party candidate to run for office and "split the vote"?

Post-Program Discussion Questions

1. How does a political party become an official party?
2. Why do we not have online voting?
3. Do you think your vote counts?
4. Is the electoral college still a good idea? If someone wins the popular vote in a presidential election, why shouldn't he or she win the presidency?
5. Are presidential debates a good way to judge someone's aptitude for the presidency?

Student Projects

- Research and report on the different ways in which Americans cast their votes, including paper ballots, mechanical and electronic counting, and various forms of electronic voting. Does one system seem more reliable and less open to fraud or error than another? Why do we not yet have e-voting, the ability to cast a vote for President from a personal home computer? Include information on the Help America Vote Act, enacted partly as a result of nearly 2 million votes being disqualified in the 2000 presidential election.
- Research and report on the electoral college. Who are the “electors”? How are they chosen? How is the number of electors per state decided upon (size of state? population?) Include information on “faithless electors,” the “winner-take-all system,” and the “district” system.
- Hold a classroom debate on one of the following topics, making sure to conduct thorough research first.
 - Do you think the media affects the outcome of nominations and elections?
 - Do you have to be rich to run for president?
 - Does your vote count?
 - Is it time to abolish the electoral college?
- Have you ever worked on a political campaign? If so, what were your duties? What made you decide to volunteer in this way? Report on your experience in the form of a journal or blog entry, and share it with the class.
- Talk to people you know who are 18 years of age or older, and ask them if they vote. Try to question an equal number of people in various age groups (e.g., college students; your parents and their peers; your grandparents and their peers). For those who do vote, ask what it was like the first time they voted, why they did so, and in which campaign they cast their vote. Present the stories to the class.
- Explore the National Student/Parent Mock Election Web site (www.nationalmockelection.org), and hold a class discussion on whether your school might want to participate in this.

Assessment Questions

- 1. In the 2000 presidential contest between Al Gore and George W. Bush, Bush was declared the winner _____.
a) after a recount of Florida's ballots (and the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court case)
b) after a recount of ballots nationwide, including absentee ballots
c) after Florida Governor Jeb Bush legally accused Democrats of obstructing justice
d) after late-arriving absentee ballots were collected and counted**

- 2. The first political parties in the U.S. were formed _____.
a) during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War, when differing economic theories threatened to split the nation
b) just before the Civil War, when the country was polarized by opposing ideologies
c) during the presidency of George Washington, when Cabinet members found they had very different views on the issues facing the new nation
d) during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, when the Founding Fathers drew up the blueprint for running the new nation**

- 3. Alexander Hamilton's _____ Party stood for a strong central government.
a) Democratic
b) Republican
c) Democratic-Republican
d) Whig
e) Federalist
f) Progressive**

- 4. Thomas Jefferson's _____ Party, in direct opposition to Hamilton's party, thought the U.S. should operate as a republic, with more power held by the states than by a central government.
a) Democratic
b) Republican
c) Democratic-Republican
d) Whig
e) Federalist
f) Progressive**

5. The _____ Party became prominent with the election of its candidate, Abraham Lincoln.
- a) Democratic
 - b) Republican
 - c) Democratic-Republican
 - d) Whig
 - e) Federalist
 - f) Progressive
6. The _____ Party is the longest operating political organization in the world.
- a) Democratic
 - b) Republican
 - c) Labor
 - d) Libertarian
7. Third party candidates _____. (*Choose all that apply*)
- a) are a disruptive influence in a democracy
 - b) serve an important function by reminding citizens that they have more than two choices when it comes to electing leaders
 - c) serve an important function by bringing important, but overlooked, issues to the political forefront
 - d) sometimes succeed in winning political office; in the 1990s, four different states elected third party governors
8. The first presidential candidate to appeal directly to the voters by hosting rallies and parades was _____.
- a) Andrew Jackson, in 1828
 - b) Abraham Lincoln, in 1860
 - c) Theodore Roosevelt, in 1912
 - d) Dwight Eisenhower, in 1952
9. The purpose of a presidential primary election is _____.
- a) for voters to declare their party affiliation
 - b) to register as many voters as possible
 - c) to allow voters to choose the next president
 - d) to allow voters to express which candidate they want to run for president

- 10. The purpose of the Republican and Democratic conventions is _____.**
- a) to allow each party to publicize its platform
 - b) for each party to officially nominate its candidate
 - c) to generate excitement about the party and its candidate
 - d) to allow campaign workers and politicians from around the country to meet together to devise campaign strategies
- 11. The President of the United States is elected by _____.**
- a) nomination at his or her party's political convention
 - b) either popular or electoral vote, depending on which is larger
 - c) the popular vote (determined by counting ballots cast by citizens who voted)
 - d) the electoral vote (cast by the electoral college)
- 12. African Americans were not given the unrestricted right to vote in federal elections until _____, when the last of the unfair "poll taxes" used to keep them from voting was banned with the passage of Amendment 24.**
- a) the Reconstruction period after the Civil War
 - b) 1920 (when women won the right to vote)
 - c) 1958
 - d) 1964

Assessment Questions Answer Key

1. In the 2000 presidential contest between Al Gore and George W. Bush, Bush was declared the winner _____.

- a) after a recount of Florida's ballots (and the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court case)
- b) after a recount of ballots nationwide, including absentee ballots
- c) after Florida Governor Jeb Bush legally accused Democrats of obstructing justice
- d) after late-arriving absentee ballots were collected and counted

A: (a) after a recount of Florida's ballots (and the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court case)

2. The first political parties in the U.S. were formed _____.

- a) during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War, when differing economic theories threatened to split the nation
- b) just before the Civil War, when the country was polarized by opposing ideologies
- c) during the presidency of George Washington, when Cabinet members found they had very different views on the issues facing the new nation
- d) during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, when the Founding Fathers drew up the blueprint for running the new nation

A: (c) during the presidency of George Washington, when Cabinet members found they had very different views on the issues facing the new nation

3. Alexander Hamilton's _____ Party stood for a strong central government.

- a) Democratic
- b) Republican
- c) Democratic-Republican
- d) Whig
- e) Federalist
- f) Progressive

A: (e) Federalist

4. Thomas Jefferson's _____ Party, in direct opposition to Hamilton's party, thought the U.S. should operate as a republic, with more power held by the states than by a central government.

- a) Democratic
- b) Republican
- c) Democratic-Republican
- d) Whig
- e) Federalist
- f) Progressive

A: (c) Democratic-Republican

5. The _____ Party became prominent with the election of its candidate, Abraham Lincoln.

- a) Democratic
- b) Republican
- c) Democratic-Republican
- d) Whig
- e) Federalist
- f) Progressive

A: (b) Republican

6. The _____ Party is the longest operating political organization in the world.

- a) Democratic
- b) Republican
- c) Labor
- d) Libertarian

A: (a) Democratic

7. Third party candidates _____. (Choose all that apply)

- a) are a disruptive influence in a democracy
- b) serve an important function by reminding citizens that they have more than two choices when it comes to electing leaders
- c) serve an important function by bringing important, but overlooked, issues to the political forefront
- d) sometimes succeed in winning political office; in the 1990s, four different states elected third party governors

A: (b) serve an important function by reminding citizens that they have more than two choices when it comes to electing leaders

(c) serve an important function by bringing important, but overlooked, issues to the political forefront

(d) sometimes succeed in winning political office; in the 1990s, four different states elected third party governors

8. The first presidential candidate to appeal directly to the voters by hosting rallies and parades was _____.

- a) Andrew Jackson, in 1828
- b) Abraham Lincoln, in 1860
- c) Theodore Roosevelt, in 1912
- d) Dwight Eisenhower, in 1952

A: (a) Andrew Jackson, in 1828

9. The purpose of a presidential primary election is ____.

- a) for voters to declare their party affiliation
- b) to register as many voters as possible
- c) to allow voters to choose the next president
- d) to allow voters to express which candidate they want to run for president

A: (d) to allow voters to express which candidate they want to run for president

10. The purpose of the Republican and Democratic conventions is ____.

- a) to allow each party to publicize its platform
- b) for each party to officially nominate its candidate
- c) to generate excitement about the party and its candidate
- d) to allow campaign workers and politicians from around the country to meet together to devise campaign strategies

A: (b) for each party to officially nominate its candidate

11. The President of the United States is elected by ____.

- a) nomination at his or her party's political convention
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A: (d) the electoral vote (cast by the electoral college)

12. African Americans were not given the unrestricted right to vote in federal elections until ____, when the last of the unfair “poll taxes” used to keep them from voting was banned with the passage of Amendment 24.

- a) the Reconstruction period after the Civil War
- b) 1920 (when women won the right to vote)
- c) 1958
- d) 1964

A: (d) 1964

Additional Resources

The White House

www.whitehouse.gov

Government Resources

THOMAS (The Library of Congress)

<http://thomas.loc.gov/links>

The National Archives

America's Historical Documents

www.archives.gov/historical-docs

League of Women Voters

www.lwv.org

FairVote

The Center for Voting and Democracy

fairvote.org

Constitution Party National Political Headquarters

www.constitutionparty.com

The Democratic Party

www.democrats.org

Green Party of the United States

www.gp.org

Libertarian Party

www.LP.org

RN: Republican National Committee | GOP

www.gop.com

Reform Party of the United States of America

www.rpusa.info

National Student/Parent Mock Election

www.nationalmockelection.org

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Dreams of Obama (Streaming Digital On Demand)

Produced on the eve of Barack Obama's historic presidential inauguration, this Frontline episode tells the story of how a little-known state senator rose from obscurity to the White House in just over four years. The program draws on interviews with those closest to Obama to provide insight into his ideas, background, and leadership style. A personal and political biography, the film examines the key moments that shaped our 44th President and asks what his election says about 21st-century America. Distributed by PBS Distribution. (60 minutes) © 2009 (# 40891)

Voting: A Right and A Responsibility (DVD/VHS)

Why should I vote? Does my vote count? This program addresses these questions and reinforces the importance of voting to the political process. The program begins with a history of voting, and the struggles of women and African Americans to gain voting rights. It then offers examples of close elections. Students are encouraged to consider how history might have been changed if the outcomes had been different. Instructions on how to vote, how to register, absentee voting, and how to use a voting machine are presented. Both primary and general elections are discussed on the local, state, and national levels, as well as referendums and votes on constitutional amendments. Students learn how to critically evaluate candidates based on their positions, experience, and other factors. A Cambridge Educational Production. (40 minutes) ©1996 (# 8052)

Primaries: Defining the Battle in New Hampshire (DVD/VHS)

After establishing the historical background of primary elections in the U.S., this fast-paced program focuses on the 2004 primary in New Hampshire to study the role of communication in the electoral process. Dr. Kathleen Kendall, author of *Communication in the Presidential Primaries*; The Washington Post's David Broder; and other prominent experts analyze speeches, ads, news broadcasts, and all manner of interpersonal interactions as the candidates, their constituents, and the media construct a campaign dialogue. The key role of TV coverage, the media's fascination with polls, and the impact of technologies such as digital cameras and the Internet are spotlighted. (23 minutes) © 2004 (# 33607)

Contemporary Political Campaigns (DVD/VHS)

This series takes a look at how the process of running for public office has changed since the founding fathers established election practices and asks whether or not democratic ideals are being served under the current system. A Cambridge Educational Production. The series includes *If I'm Elected: Modern Campaign Techniques* | *The Price of Power: Money in Politics*. (2-part series, 25 minutes each) © 1993 (# 8043)

The People and the Power Game (DVD/VHS)

Has the American political process been hijacked by media pundits, lobbyists, and leadership blinded by narrow ideologies? In this eye-opening three-part series, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Hedrick Smith takes on the White House, Congress, the media, and the special interest lobbies to investigate America's political gridlock. Studded with high-profile interviews and exclusive footage, each program focuses on the agendas and the infighting that have made the Washington power game a study in frustration. Smith's book, *The Power Game: How Washington Works*, is required reading on modern U.S. politics on many campuses. The series includes *The Unelected: The Media* | *The Unelected: The Lobbies* | *The Elected: The Presidency and Congress*. (3-part series, 41-78 minutes each) © 1996 (# 10133)

Making the Message: The Fight for the Presidency (DVD/VHS)

What does it take to win the White House? Produced by award-winning filmmaker Theodore Bogosian, this unprecedented behind-the-scenes account of the 2004 Republican and Democratic national conventions examines how candidates build their platforms and generate momentum. Interviewees include the convention chairmen, campaign strategists, members of special interest groups, and New York Times staffers such as columnists Maureen Dowd and David Brooks, chief political correspondent Adam Nagourney, political reporter Jim Rutenberg, and chief correspondent R. W. Apple, Jr. A Discovery Channel Production. (88 minutes) © 2004 (# 33855)

A Third Choice

This program examines America's fascinating national experience with third parties and independent candidates, covering more than 200 years of American political history. The program looks back to the birth of the two-party system and explores the most influential third-party movements in American political history, including Abraham Lincoln and the rise of the Republicans, Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party, Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrats and Henry Wallace's Progressives in the 1948 elections, George Wallace's American Independent Party in 1968, and Ross Perot. The program features interviews with leading academic experts on American politics, a rich collection of campaign memorabilia, rare archival footage, artwork, political cartoons, and campaign songs. (57 minutes) © 1996 (# 6550)

Debating Our Destiny II: U.S. Presidential Debates, 2000-2004

Although today's voters are more media-savvy than ever, televised debates continue to have a tremendous political impact. In this sequel to public television's *Debating Our Destiny: 40 Years of Presidential Debates* (item #39761), *NewsHour* host Jim Lehrer turns his attention to the debates that ushered America into the 21st century. The program examines the *Bush vs. Gore* and *Cheney vs. Lieberman* broadcasts in the fall of 2000 and the *Bush vs. Kerry* and *Cheney vs. Edwards* contests in 2004. Highlighting some of the most compelling exchanges in the history of televised politics, the program presents exclusive interviews with George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Senators Joseph Lieberman, John Kerry, and John Edwards. (57 minutes) © 2008 (#39780)