

SS.7.C.2.8

Identify America's current political parties, and illustrate their ideas about government.

SS.7.C.2.8 Benchmark Clarification 2: Students will evaluate the impact political parties have on society, government, or the political system.

Political parties play a major role and have a large impact in American society. Political parties are important to the democratic process because they help people to communicate their ideas about government. Because political parties are made up of large groups of people, their group's ideas can be more easily heard by the government. Political parties also educate citizens about issues during elections. Most people vote for candidates from their own political party because of the issues that their political party supports.

Political parties impact the government at the federal, state, and local levels. Because there are many more elected offices at the state and local levels, political parties tend to be more active at these levels. Also, political parties raise and spend money in order to get candidates elected and to help spread their message to voters.

The political party that wins more seats in one house of the national or state legislature becomes the **majority party** in that house of the legislature. The party that wins fewer seats in one house of the national or state legislature becomes the **minority party** in that house of the legislature. The majority party in the legislature often has more control over the lawmaking process than the minority power. However, the minority party remains active and uses its influence as much as possible in the lawmaking process.

majority party - the political party with the most elected members

minority party - the political party second in the number of elected members

political party - an organization that tries to get political power by electing members to public office so that their political ideas can become laws or policies