



Voting and Elections:
SS.7.CG.2.6
Election Processes
READING #2

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.2.6 Benchmark Clarification 2: Students will explain the origins of the Republican and Democratic political parties and evaluate their roles in shaping public policy.

A **political party** is a group of citizens or voters with similar views on public issues who 1) work together to put their ideas into action in the government and 2) work together to elect candidates.

One of the most important jobs of political parties is to nominate candidates to run for office as the representatives of their party. Parties choose a **candidate** who agrees with their beliefs and then try to persuade voters to support their candidate. Competing political parties give voters a choice among candidates and ideas.

The voters can look at the **party's platform** to know where a party stands on the major issues. A platform is a written statement of the party's principles, beliefs, and positions on issues. Party platforms are often the length of short books. Each individual part of a platform is called a plank. The platform communicates to voters what the political party plans to do if it wins. (Examples: Platform Issue = Healthcare; Plank = Agreeing/Disagreeing with government-funded healthcare.)

The United States has a long tradition of a **two-party system**; this means that two major political parties have controlled elections and have the most voter participation. The two major political parties today are the Democrats and the Republicans.

Political Party	Year Founded (Created)	Core Beliefs
Democratic	1828	The national government should take a more active role in people's lives, especially those in need. Democrats sometimes support raising taxes and government spending to pay for social programs.
Republican	1854	The national government should take a less active role in people's lives, and people can take care of themselves without government help. They sometimes support lowering taxes and government spending.

candidate - a person running for political office

Democratic Party - a political party that believes that the federal government should take a more active role in people's lives, particularly those who are in need

national government - the government of the United States

party platform - a written statement of the goals of a political party

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

Republican Party - a political party that believes that the federal government should play a less active role in people's lives and that individuals can take care of themselves without government help

two party system - a political system consisting primarily of two major parties, more or less equal in strength