

▶ Objectives

1. Analyze how the administration of elections in the United States helps make democracy work.
2. Define the role of local precincts and polling places in the election process.
3. Describe the various ways in which voters can cast their ballots.
4. Outline the role that voting devices play in the election process.

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▶ Key Terms

- **ballot:** the medium by which a voter registers a choice in an election
- **absentee voting:** the process of voting without going to polling places on election day
- **coattail effect:** when a strong candidate at the top of a ballot attracts support for lesser candidates in his or her party
- **precinct:** a voting district
- **polling place:** the place where voters in a precinct vote

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▶ Introduction

- How are elections conducted in the United States?
  - Elections are conducted by qualified voters casting secret ballots under the supervision of precinct election boards.
  - Depending upon State and local laws, voters may cast ballots within precincts at polling places on election day, at polling places just before election day, or by mail-in absentee ballot in the weeks leading up to the election.

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## ▶ Administering Elections



- Checkpoint: Who controls elections?
  - State governments make most election laws, as most elections are for State and local offices.
  - The federal government sets the rules, such as the November election dates, for electing members of Congress and the President.
  - Congress also requires the use of secret ballots, bans corruption, protects voting rights, and regulates campaign financing.

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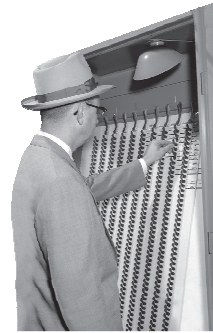
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## ▶ Administering Elections, cont.



- The Help America Vote Act of 2000 requires States to:
  - replace lever-operated and punch-card voting machines
  - improve their administration of elections
  - computerize voter registration systems
  - allow provisional voting



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## ▶ Election Day



- Most States hold elections for State office in November of every even-numbered year, on the Tuesday following the first Monday.
- Some States, such as New Jersey and Virginia, elect State officials in odd-numbered years.
- City, county, and other local election dates vary from State to State, usually taking place in November or in the spring.

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## ▶ Early Voting



- Checkpoint: What is early voting?
  - Early voting involves casting ballots before election day. States have greatly expanded early voting in recent years.
  - Voters can apply for absentee ballots in advance and usually mail them to their local election office before election day.
  - Two-thirds of the States also let voters cast ballots at polling places for a period of several days before election day.

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## ▶ What Happens to a Ballot?

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- Paper ballots are collected and taken to a counting facility.
- Absentee ballots are mailed to the counting facility or brought to the polling place.
- Electronic ballots are sent electronically or stored and sent manually.



AUDIO TOUR

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## ▶ The Coattail Effect

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- A strong candidate for an office at the top of a ballot can attract voters to other candidates on the party's ticket.
- A weak candidate, on the other hand, can cost a party votes.
- Holding State and local elections on different days from federal elections might reduce this coattail effect.



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## ▶ Precincts and Polling Places

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- Precincts are small voting districts with a polling place in or near them.
- Precinct election boards supervise the voting process, opening and closing the polls at times set by State law.
- Precinct boards must also ensure that ballots and voting devices are available and that only qualified voters cast ballots. They often count votes as well.
- Each party can have a poll watcher at a polling place to monitor the process.

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## ▶ Casting Ballots

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- Ballots can take many forms, from paper sheets to electronic records.
- Voting was once public, but now every State requires the use of a secret ballot.
- By 1900, most States used the Australian Ballot, which remains the basic form of ballot used today. This ballot type:
  - Is printed at public expense
  - Lists the names of all candidates
  - Is given out only at the polls
  - Is marked in secret

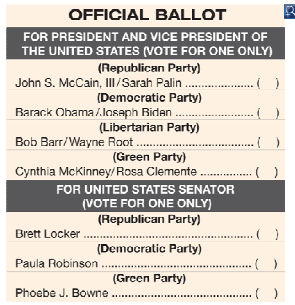
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### Office-Group Ballot

- Most States use the office-group ballot.
- All candidates for an office are grouped together under the title of that office, often in random order.
- This method is favored because voters must consider each choice, office by office.



**OFFICIAL BALLOT**

FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (VOTE FOR ONE ONLY)

(Republican Party)

John S. McCain, III / Sarah Palin ..... ( )

(Democratic Party)

Barack Obama / Joseph Biden ..... ( )

(Libertarian Party)

Bob Barr / Wayne Root ..... ( )

(Green Party)

Cynthia McKinney / Rosa Clemente ..... ( )

FOR UNITED STATES SENATOR (VOTE FOR ONE ONLY)

(Republican Party)

Brett Locker ..... ( )

(Democratic Party)

Paula Robinson ..... ( )

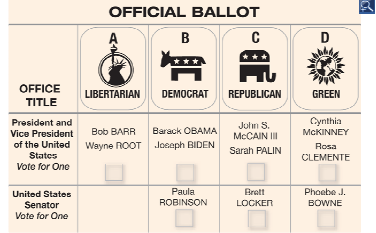
(Green Party)

Phoebbe J. Bowne ..... ( )

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### Party-Column Ballot

- Some States use the party-column ballot, which lists all candidates under their party's name.
- This encourages straight-ticket voting and the coattail effect.



**OFFICIAL BALLOT**

OFFICE TITLE	A LIBERTARIAN	B DEMOCRAT	C REPUBLICAN	D GREEN
President and Vice President of the United States Vote for One	Bob BARR Wayne ROOT	Barack OBAMA Joseph BIDEN	John S. McCain III Sarah PALIN	Cynthia McKINNEY Rosa CLEMENTE
United States Senator Vote for One		Paula ROBINSON	Brett LOCKER	Phoebbe J. BOWNE

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### Bed-Sheet Ballots

- The so-called bed-sheet ballots in most U.S. elections are very long, listing many candidates, offices, and ballot measures.
- Critics say this length makes it hard for voters to know all the candidates and their qualifications.
- Some argue that only those who make public policy should be elected, while the many local officials who administer policies could be appointed to office.

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### Electronic Vote Counting

- Voting systems based on electronic data processing include optical scanners and direct response electronic voting machines (DREs).
- Some fear that DREs could be attacked by computer hackers.



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## ▶ Vote-by-Mail Elections



- A number of States conduct some of their voting on local city or county measures by mail.
- Oregon holds all its elections by mail.
- Critics fear that vote-by-mail is subject to fraud and may lack privacy.
- Supporters say the method increases voter participation, costs less than operating polls, and is as reliable as other voting methods.

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## ▶ Online Voting



- Online voting may be the wave of the future, having been used on a small scale in presidential primaries.
- Supporters say online voting will be more convenient, less expensive, and likely to increase voter participation.
- Critics fear technical problems, computer viruses, and hackers. They also point out that not all Americans can afford a home computer.

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## ▶ Review



- Now that you have learned about how elections are conducted in the United States, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
  - How fair and effective is the electoral process?

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