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**Introduction**

‘Presidential elections’ is one of the most serious and weightiest issues that prompt increased interest and debates among people all over the world. Election is an opportunity to decide who will make responsible decisions or rule the country during the next several years. It is a crucial mechanism that plays a great role in society and state organization, and thus, in life of every individual in particular. The procedure varies in different countries, each of which has its own laws, activities, and customs that govern this contentious formula.

The purpose of our investigation is to study, describe and reveal advantages and disadvantages of this significant process in the country that claims to have the most unbiased and impartial system of electing its president – the United States of America.

In the research the following goals are pursued:

1. to get acquainted with the candidates for the presidency themselves, their qualifications for office, the procedure for gaining ballot access, the stages of their campaigns, and the protection accorded them by the federal government.
2. to illustrate the nomination process, describing the evolution of the current system of primaries and caucuses, the basic structure, methods and rules governing selection of delegates to the nominating conventions, and the major characteristics of the contemporary process;
3. to examine the national party conventions, including both their evolution and traditions, and contemporary structure and procedures;
4. to analyze the general election campaign, single out widely used campaign methods, examine the important role played by television — through advertising, news coverage, and debates, and present information on Election Day itself;
5. to evaluate the information on the Electoral College, to understand the process by which the President and Vice President are officially elected;
6. to describe the formal ceremony of presidential inauguration, including the information about its time and place.

All these tasks are realized in six chapters of the research which are closely connected and complement one another.

In the research the following methods are used:

1. analysis of various sources of information: books, encyclopedias, publications in magazines, newspapers, the Internet;
2. compilation of this information;
3. comparative analysis of the facts.

**Chapter I. Presidential Candidates**

The basic process of selecting the President of the United States is spelled out in the U.S. Constitution, and it has been modified by the 12th, 22nd, and 23rd amendments. Every four years, Americans elect a President and Vice President, thereby choosing both national leaders and a course of public policy. The system that governs the election of the President combines constitutional and statutory requirements, rules of the national and state political parties, political traditions, and contemporary developments and practices.

Article II, section 1 of the Constitution specifies that, no person except a natural-born citizen of the United States, at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty-five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States. Under the 22nd Amendment, no one may serve more than two full terms, although a Vice President who succeeds to the presidency and serves less than two full years of the prior incumbent’s term may seek election to two additional terms.

American voters have chosen men of varied backgrounds on 55 occasions they have gone to the polls to elect a President. All American Presidents served the country previously either in government or the military. Of the 24 Presidents who served prior to 1900, seven had been Vice Presidents, four were Members of Congress, four were governors, and nine previously held an appointive federal position. The trend in the 20th and 21st century presidential elections has favored former Vice Presidents, Governors, and Senators. The previous occupations of American Presidents of this period were: career Army officers, cabinet officers (e.g. Taft and Hoover), governors (e.g. Wilson, F.D. Roosevelt, Clinton), Senators (e.g. Kennedy) and Vice Presidents (e.g. T. Roosevelt, Truman, Nixon).

Before the primaries and conventions, the candidates determine the presidential field. The decline of party leader dominance over the nominating process has resulted in a system whereby self-selected candidates compete in the states for the delegates needed for nomination. The democratization of the nominating process has meant that many candidates enter the race, begin raising money, and organize for the primaries and caucuses well before the election year in order to be competitive. In reality, only a small number of these are considered by the media as serious candidates seeking the nomination of the two major parties.

The formal announcement of candidacy is often preceded by a period in which candidates “test the waters” as unannounced candidates for nomination; this may begin several years before the convention. Likely candidates may form exploratory committees to gauge popular support and to begin developing a base of supporters and contributors, while avoiding some of the legal requirements of the Federal Election Campaign Act’s (FECA). As unofficial candidates who are not technically campaigning for office, persons may raise and spend unlimited amounts of money without registering as candidates with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Upon declaration of candidacy, however, the individual must register with the FEC and report all financial activity while testing the waters; these amounts become retroactively subject to all FECA regulations.

An individual must file a statement of candidacy with the FEC within 15 days of reaching the law’s financial threshold (i.e., $5,000 in receipts or expenditures), and must name a principal campaign committee to receive contributions and make expenditures. This committee must file a statement of organization with the FEC within ten days after being designated; the statement must identify the committee’s title (which includes the candidate’s name), the treasurer, bank depositories, and any other committees the candidate has authorized to raise or spend on his or her behalf. Such other committees which the candidate authorizes may raise and spend funds, but they must report such activity through the principal committee.

The timing of the formal announcement is crucial because of its political impact, and also because of the legal and tactical implications. Once a public declaration of candidacy is made, candidates are subject to state and national spending limits if they qualify for and choose to accept public matching funds, and they are subject to the broadcasting provisions of the equal-time rule.

Nominations today are usually won during the primary campaign rather than at the convention, and primaries have proliferated and been scheduled earlier in the election year. Because of these developments, competitors are pressed to announce their candidacies much earlier than in years past.

The guidelines that candidates follow to qualify for primaries and caucuses differ from state to state. In primary states, the Secretary of State is the authority for listing candidate names on the ballot; in caucus states, the parties oversee the procedures for candidates to gain ballot access.

Candidates generally file a statement of candidacy with the Secretary of State or the party chair at the state level. In some primary states, the Secretary of State may automatically certify for the ballot the names of all major party candidates, those submitted by the party, candidates who have qualified in other states or candidates who have applied with the FEC or are eligible for federal matching funds. Presidential candidates may also be required to pay a filing fee, submit petitions, or both. Signatures may be required from a requisite number of voters in each congressional district or from a requisite number of voters statewide.

The primary season gradually reduces the field of major party candidates. The accelerated pace of the present system winnows out those who fall short of expectations, and hence, find it difficult to raise the money needed to sustain their candidacies. Furthermore, the reforms of the past 30 years have changed the dynamics of the nominating process by closely tying the allocation of delegates to electoral performance. The days when a candidate could compete in a select number of primaries to demonstrate popular appeal have passed: the nomination goes to the candidate who has amassed a majority of delegates in the primaries and caucuses. Party conventions have largely become ratifying bodies that confer the nomination on the candidate who won it in state contests. The 1976 Republican National Convention was the most recent one at which the determination of a major party’s nominee was in any real doubt before the nominating ballots were cast [3;221].

The names of the major party nominees for President and Vice President are automatically placed on the general election ballot. Some states also list the names of presidential electors adjacent to the presidential and vice presidential candidates whom they support. Voters mark their ballots once for a party’s presidential and vice presidential ticket; electors also cast a single vote in the Electoral College for the party ticket. Minor party and independent candidates are also listed on the ballot, if they qualify according to provisions of the state codes, and several such candidates are usually on the ballot in different states.

In the aftermath of the 1968 assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy while he was seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, Congress passed legislation which, for the first time, authorized Secret Service protection of presidential and vice presidential candidates. The law made the Secretary of the Treasury responsible for determining which major candidates are eligible for protection, after consultation with a bipartisan advisory committee comprised of the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate, the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, and one additional member to be chosen by the committee. On occasion, candidates have declined protection offered to them.

While the law provides protection for major party presidential and vice presidential nominees in the general election, it does not specify the criteria for determining major candidates in the primary season. However, criteria and standards in the advisory committee’s guidelines specify that an eligible individual: (1) is a publicly declared candidate; (2) is actively campaigning nationally and is contesting at least 10 state primaries; (3) is pursuing the nomination of a qualified party (i.e., whose presidential candidate received at least 10% of the popular vote in the prior election); (4) has qualified for public matching funds of at least $100,000, and has raised at least $2 million in additional contributions; and (5) as of April 1 of the election year, has received at least an average of five percent in individual candidate preferences in the most recent national opinion polls by ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN, or has received at least 10% of the votes cast for all candidates in two same-day or consecutive primaries or caucuses[8]. Notwithstanding this, the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the advisory committee, may provide protection for a candidate even if all of the conditions of the guidelines have not been met. Secret Service protection for primary candidates generally begins shortly after January 1 of the election year. On occasion, the Secretary of the Treasury has accorded protection to certain candidates earlier than the election year.

**Chapter II. The Nomination Process**

The nomination process is the initial testing ground for the next president. It plays an essential role in presidential elections by narrowing the field of major party candidates. The process of nominating a presidential candidate begins months before the convention. The most important step in the process is the selection of convention delegates. At the convention, each delegate votes for a presidential candidate. The candidate who gets a majority of the delegate votes wins the party’s nomination.

Delegate selection takes place in elections and other state contests that occur during the late winter and spring of each presidential election year. Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands and other U.S. territories also send delegates to the conventions.

The national committee of each party decides how many delegates each state may send to the convention. The number is based on the party’s strength in the state in recent elections. Thousands of delegates attend each convention, but exact numbers vary from year to year.

As there are two major competing political parties in the USA it makes sense to take a closer look at them.

The Democratic Party has two basic types of delegates, grouped by whether or not they are pledged to support a particular candidate. Furthermore, there are three categories of pledged delegates (which comprise the majority of delegates to the convention) and four categories of unpledged delegates.

The allocation formula determines only the number of delegates in the pledged categories: (1) district-level base delegates; (2) at-large base delegates; and (1) pledged party and elected official delegates.

Of the number of delegates assigned to a state according to the allocation formula, 75 % are assigned at the district level and 25 % are designated at-large. Although district-level and at-large delegates are allocated in the same manner, they are chosen separately at different stages of the process.

Pledged party and elected official delegates represent a 15% addition to the base number of allocated delegates. They are usually chosen in the same manner as the at-large delegates.

The number of unpledged delegates for a state depends on the number of individuals available in each specified category. Delegate slots are allocated for: (1) former Democratic Presidents and Vice Presidents, former Democratic Majority Leaders of the U.S. Senate, former Democratic Speakers of the U.S. House of Representatives, and all former Chairs of the Democratic National Committee; (2) Democratic Governors; (3) members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), including the State chairs and vice chairs and officers of the DNC; and (4) all Democratic Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Aside from three congressional district delegates and six at-large delegates assigned to each state under Republican allocation rules, a number of bonus delegates may be awarded for the at-large category as well.

Four and one-half at-large bonus delegates are assigned to each state which cast its electoral votes for the Republican nominee in the previous election. One bonus delegate is allocated to each State in which a Republican was elected to the Senate or the Governorship between the last and the upcoming presidential election. One bonus delegate is also allocated to states in which half the delegation to the House of Representatives is Republican. (In 1996, 15 at-large delegates have been allocated to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico has been allocated 14 at-large delegates, and four delegates have been allocated each to Guam and the Virgin Islands.)

The national party also awards bonus delegates to states where the primary or caucus is held after mid-March of the election year. In states where the primary or caucus is scheduled between March 15 and April 14, a 5% increase to the national convention delegation is awarded; a 7½% increase is awarded to state parties with contests scheduled between April 15 and May 14; and, a 10% increase is awarded to states where the primary or caucus is held between May 15 and the third Tuesday in June [11].

State parties have considerable flexibility to determine the means of electing or choosing the district and at-large delegates, according to national party rules.

There are two main methods of choosing which delegate candidates will attend the convention as delegates. They are the primary election system and the caucus-convention system. Some states allow each party to choose which of the two systems it will use.

At one time, political parties nominated nearly all candidates at national, state, and local conventions or in caucuses. A caucus is a meeting of party members or leaders to select nominees for public office and to conduct other party business. In the presidential nominating process, it is often used in combination with a state convention to elect delegates to the national nominating convention. The caucus-convention process is typically comprised of several tiers, beginning with broad-based meetings of rank-and-file party members, usually at the precinct level. Because of their cumbersome nature, precinct caucuses invariably attract fewer voters than do primaries. Participants must invest substantial time to attend a caucus, in contrast to voting in a primary, and participants usually register their support for a presidential candidate by public declaration (by a show of hands or by gathering in groups according to presidential preference). In some places, caucus participants may vote by ballot for presidential candidates, but, in any event, the process requires face-to-face contact with other participants that is not required when casting a ballot at a polling place.

Once the presidential preference vote is tallied, caucus participants elect representatives for their preference who attend the meeting convened as the next stage in the process. Precinct caucuses are usually followed by county or congressional district meetings, with a smaller number of representatives selected at each stage—based on support for them or the candidate they favor—to go on to the next level. Delegates to the national convention are finally chosen by the representatives to the congressional district caucus or the state convention, or both.

A primary is a state-run election for the purpose of nominating party candidates to run in the general election. In a primary election, a political party, in effect, holds an election among its own members who will represent it in the coming general election. Any number of party members can run for an office in a primary. But only the winning candidate can represent the party in the general election. Parties learn from the primary votes which candidates the members of their parties prefer. When several candidates enter a primary, the winner may receive less than 50 percent of the vote. Some states, especially in the South, then hold a run-off primary, in which the two candidates with the highest number of votes run against each other.

Nearly all states have a binding primary, in which the results of the election legally bind some or all of the delegates to vote for a particular candidate at the national convention, for a certain number of ballots or until the candidate releases the delegates. A handful of states practice a non-binding primary, which may select candidates to a state convention which then selects delegates. Also, presidential preference contests exist, which are merely "beauty contests" or straw polls that do not result in the selection of any delegates, which are instead chosen at caucuses. Both parties have rules which designate superdelegates.

In most states, only voters registered with a party may vote in that party's primary, known as a closed primary. In some states, a semi-closed primary is practiced, in which voters unaffiliated with a party (independents) may choose a party primary in which to vote. In an open primary, any voter may vote in any party's primary. In all of these systems, a voter may participate in only one primary; that is, a voter who casts a vote for a candidate standing for the Republican nomination for president cannot cast a vote for a candidate standing for the Democratic nomination, or vice versa. A few states once staged a blanket primary, in which voters could vote for one candidate in multiple primaries, but the practice was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 2000 case of California Democratic Party v. Jones as violating the freedom of assembly guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Under the 2008 Democratic Party selection rules, adopted in 2006, delegates are selected under proportional representation, with a candidate requiring a minimum threshold of 15% in a state in order to receive delegates. In addition, the Democratic Party has the right to reject any candidate under their bylaws. Each state publishes a Delegate Selection Plan that notes the mechanics of calculating the number of delegates per congressional district, and how votes are transferred from local conventions to the state and national convention. The Republican Party adopted its rules at the time of the 2004 convention. There are no provisions requiring proportional representation, and as such, many states used the winner take all method in 2004 [13].

**Chapter III. The Nominating Conventions**

presidential candidate inauguration electoral

The United States presidential nominating convention is held every four years in the United States by the political parties who will be fielding nominees in the upcoming U.S. presidential election. The formal purpose of such a convention is to select the party's nominee for President, as well as to adopt a statement of party principles and goals known as the platform and adopt the rules for the party's activities, including the presidential nominating process for the next election cycle.

The writers of the Constitution of the United States did not outline a procedure for nominating a President. Until the early 1830’s, a party’s supporters in Congress or in state legislatures usually nominated the party’s candidate for President.

The Anti-Masonic Party held the first national nominating convention in September 1832. The first convention that closely resembled today’s gatherings was that of the Democratic-Republican Party in 1832. Soon, the convention became the established procedure in the United States for nominating presidential candidates[1;381].

Due to changes in election laws and the manner in which political campaigns are run, conventions since the last quarter of the 20th century have virtually abdicated their original roles, and are today mostly ceremonial affairs. The two major conventions are the Democratic National Convention and the Republican National Convention. Some minor parties also select their nominees by convention, including the Green Party, Libertarian Party, Constitution Party, and Reform Party USA.

The convention cycle begins with the official “call” to the convention, customarily issued by the national committees of the two major parties some 18 months in advance. The “call” is an invitation from the national party to the state and territory parties to convene to select a presidential nominee. It also sets out the number of delegates to be awarded to each, as well as the rules for the nomination process.

The convention is typically held in a major city selected by the national party organization 18–24 months before it is to be held. As the two major conventions have grown into large, publicized affairs with significant economic impact, cities today compete vigorously to be awarded host responsibilities, citing their meeting venues, lodging facilities, and entertainment as well as offering economic incentives.

The location of early conventions was dictated by the difficulty of transporting delegates from far-flung parts of the country; early Democratic and Whig Conventions were frequently held in the central Eastern Seaboard port of Baltimore, Maryland. As the U.S. expanded westward and railroads connected cities, Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Illinois became the favored hosts [8]. In the present day, political symbolism affects the selection of the host city as much as economic or logistical ones do. A particular city might be selected to enhance the standing of a native son, or in an effort to curry favor with residents of that state.

Although conventions of both the Democratic and Republican parties are opened by a temporary presiding officer, election of a permanent chair is usually one of the first points in the order of business. The Permanent Chair, who presides for the balance of the convention, is usually a senior party figure, most often the party leader in the House of Representatives. The party’s national committee also designates a person to kick off the convention with a rousing speech called the keynote address. Members of Congress or other important party members usually are chosen for these positions. The committee also picks a convention site.

Much of the convention’s official business is carried out by special committees. Committees of the national conventions prepare reports for the conventions on delegate credentials, rules of procedure, and party platforms. The full convention ratifies or amends the respective recommendations from each of these committees.

Contemporary national conventions are generally held over a four-day period, with both the Democratic and Republican parties observing similar schedules. The proceedings are regularly interspersed with films honoring party figures. A continuing procession of party notables, usually selected to reflect the party's diversity, offer short speeches throughout the proceedings, while clergymen from various denominations offer invocations and benedictions to open and close each session.

The first day of a national convention is generally devoted to routine business. The convention is called to order by the national party chair, the roll of delegations is called, and the temporary chair is elected. Welcoming speeches are delivered by the mayor of the host city and often the governor of the state in which the convention is held. Committee appointments, which have been previously announced, are ratified. The Democrats generally install permanent convention officers at the first session, while the Republicans, in recent years, have completed adoption of credentials, rules, and the party platform before turning over convention proceedings to the permanent chair, usually on the second or third day.

The Democratic Convention keynote address is also delivered on the first day of convention proceedings. The Republicans tend to schedule keynote speeches for later in the convention, usually at the second session. The keynote address sets the themes and tone of the convention and often of the general election campaign to follow. The keynote address is highly partisan in tone and content. It extols the party record and the incumbent President, when the party holds the White House. It attacks the opposition candidates, policies, and record.

Routine convention business often spills over into the second day of proceedings, as reports of the credentials, rules, and platform committees are debated and approved by the delegates. While the acceptance of delegate credentials is usually a perfunctory procedure, in some years credentials have been hotly contested as rival slates of delegates from the same state, representing contending factions, were presented.

Adoption of the Rules Committee report, setting convention procedures, is another important function usually completed on the second day of the convention. Consideration of the committee report has occasionally been accompanied by spirited debate, particularly in a close convention when delegates have sought to boost their candidate's chances by securing rules changes.

Adoption of the party platform is one more task completed on the second day of a convention, although consideration of proposed amendments to the Platform Committee draft will occasionally continue into the third day.

The party platform, a statement of principles and policy proposals, is prepared in advance by the Platform Committee, but is sometimes amended on the floor through minority reports. These reports are filed by those who were unsuccessful in incorporating their views into the draft version. Consideration of minority reports by the convention is contingent upon obtaining a threshold level of delegate support.

The third day of national conventions is usually reserved for the nomination of the presidential candidate. In recent years, the nomination is accomplished in one evening, with only one ballot. Delegates officially recommend the nomination of candidates in nominating speeches, in which the speaker praises the accomplishments of the candidate. Each speech may build to a climax that triggers a massive demonstration in the convention hall. Delegates and other supporters of the candidate parade wave banners, throw confetti, and cheer.

The roll call begins after all nominating speeches have been made. In the roll call, each state and territory casts a ballot that indicates how many of its delegate votes it is awarding to each candidate. The candidate who gets a majority of the votes of all the delegates at the convention formally becomes the party’s nominee. If no candidate receives a majority, more ballots would be cast until enough delegates switch their votes to give one candidate a majority. However, a second ballot has not been required at any Democratic or Republican national convention since the early 1950’s.

The fourth and final day of the convention is usually dominated by the nomination of thevice presidential candidate and the presidential and vice presidential nominees’acceptance speeches. In a current practice embraced by both parties, the choice of a vice presidential nominee remains the prerogative of the presidential candidate. The procedure for nominating the vice presidential candidates mirrors that for the presidential candidates, with the name placed in nomination by a prominent party leader, seconded by others, and followed by a roll call of the states (often a motion to nominate by acclamation occurs in place of the roll call).

Following his or her nomination, the vice presidential candidate delivers an acceptance speech which is followed by the last major activity of the convention — the presidential nominee’s acceptance speech.

Democratic nominee Franklin Roosevelt, in 1932, was the first candidate both to appear at a national convention, and to deliver his acceptance in person. Prior to that time, a committee of party dignitaries customarily visited the candidate to inform him of his nomination.

The candidate’s acceptance speech ranks with the keynote address as one of the highlights of the convention, and it serves as its finale. It provides an opportunity for the nominee to establish the tone, content, and general themes of the election campaign to come, while providing incumbent Presidents running for reelection with the opportunity to defend their record and seek a renewed mandate from the voters.

Immediately following the nominee’s acceptance speech, the presidential nominee is joined on the podium by the vice presidential nominee, their spouses, families, defeated rivals and other party leaders for the traditional unity pose. Shortly afterwards, the convention is adjourned sine die.

**Chapter IV. The General Election Campaign**

Adjournment of the national nominating conventions marks the beginning of the next phase of the presidential election process — the general election campaign. In the months following the conventions, the candidates, parties, and campaign organizations seek to build a winning popular and electoral vote coalition.

Labor Day (the first Monday in September) has traditionally marked the start of the general election campaign. However, in practice the campaign begins much earlier, because the nominees are known long before the national conventions.

The general election campaign is publicly funded through the taxpayer check-off system. Since public financing was introduced in the 1970s, all Democratic and Republican candidates have opted to receive federal matching funds for the general election; in exchange for such funds, they agree to limit their spending to an amount equal to the federal matching funds they receive plus a maximum personal contribution of $50,000. By 2004 each major party nominee received some $75 million [10].

Minor party presidential candidates face formidable barriers. Whereas Democratic and Republican presidential candidates automatically are listed first and second on general election ballots, minor party candidates must navigate the complex and varied state laws to gain ballot access. In addition, a new party is eligible for federal financing in an election only if it received at least 5 percent of the vote in the previous election. All parties that receive at least 25 percent of the vote in the prior presidential election are entitled to equivalent public funding.

Establishing a general election campaign organization is one of the main tasks of the nominees immediately after the conventions. In recent years, presidential campaigns have been managed by separate candidate-centered organizations, ad-hoc groups assembled for the specific purpose of winning the election [4;260]. After the conventions, these committees are usually expanded from the nominee’s primary organization to include key party professionals and staff from the campaigns of rival contenders for the nomination.

The campaign organization prepares the campaign plan, schedules appearances by the nominees and surrogate campaigners, conducts opposition and survey research, manages the national media campaign, and conducts both voter registration and get-out- the-vote (GOTV) drives. The organization is organized on the national, state, and local levels, overlapping, especially on the local level, existing party structures. The campaign organization seeks to broaden the candidate’s appeal beyond committed partisans, bringing his or her message to the largest number of independent voters possible and to dissatisfied members of the other party.

Campaign plans detail the strategy and tactics which the campaign organizations and candidates hope will bring a winning combination of electoral and popular votes in the general election. They specify the issues to be emphasized by the nominees and aspects of the candidates’ personal image they hope to project to the voters. They include: plans of attack on the platform, issues, and candidates of the opposition; targeting of socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious groups deemed to be most amenable to the campaign message; assessments of the ticket’s strengths and weaknesses in various states; and decisions on which geographic areas the candidates should concentrate in order to assemble an electoral college majority.

Campaign plans, while often quite detailed, tend to be flexible. They seek to anticipate possible events, emerging issues, and fluctuations in voter attitudes, allowing candidate and organization activities to be adjusted or “fine tuned” in order to strengthen the ticket as needed and to most effectively allocate resources.

The contemporary model of presidential candidates crisscrossing the country on campaign tours, participating in a wide variety of political gatherings, is actually a fairly recent innovation in presidential campaign activity.

Throughout the 19th century, and well into the 20th, campaigns were conducted largely at grassroots levels by “surrogates”–party leaders and officeholders who spoke for the national ticket. With a few notable exceptions–in 1896, Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan toured the country by rail in his impassioned, yet unsuccessful, campaign, nominees conducted “front porch campaigns,” staying at home, receiving groups of supporters, and issuing occasional statements to the press [4;42]

A variation of the front porch campaign survives in contemporary presidential electoral politics. Sitting Presidents running for reelection, seeking both to maximize the advantages of incumbency and to project a “presidential” image, are likely to make use of the “Rose Garden” campaign style. They maintain a limited campaign schedule, while carrying out their duties as President. The incumbent makes well publicized use of the perquisites of the Presidency, including the use of the President’s airplane—Air Force One, scheduling frequent announcements and activities at the White House, and delivering grants and other federal benefits in states and localities which, it is hoped, contribute to the reelection effort’s success.

Active campaigning by presidential candidates became more common in the 20th century. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt conducted the first modern “whistle stop” campaign, traveling 13,000 miles by train and visiting 36 states. In succeeding elections, the “whistle stop” campaign, in which candidates toured the country by train, delivering speeches from the rear platforms, became a regular fixture of presidential politics. President Harry Truman apparently holds the record, covering 32,000 miles and averaging 10 speeches a day in his successful 1948 election bid [1;1110].

During the same period, candidates made increasing use of air travel, another area in which Roosevelt pioneered. In 1932, he flew from New York to Chicago to accept the Democratic nomination, the first candidate to do so in person. Modern presidential campaigns are almost exclusively conducted by air, with the candidates able to cover both coasts in a single day. Air travel enables candidates to touch base in media markets in different parts of the country on the same day, maximizing their television exposure to voters. Sometimes, the candidates’ appearances are confined to airport rallies, after which the campaign plane flies to another metropolitan area.

Modern presidential campaigns are media driven, as candidates spend millions of dollars on television advertising and on staged public events (photo ops) designed to generate favorable media coverage. The most widely viewed campaign spectacles are the debates between the Democratic and Republican presidential and vice presidential candidates (minor parties are often excluded from such debates, a fact cited by critics who contend that the current electoral process is undemocratic and inimical to viewpoints other than those of the two major parties). First televised in 1960, such debates have been a staple of the presidential campaign since 1976. They are closely analyzed in the media and sometimes result in a shift of public opinion in favor of the candidate who is perceived to be the winner or who is seen as more attractive or personable by most viewers. (Some analysts have argued, for example, that John F. Kennedy's relaxed and self-confident manner, as well as his good looks, aided him in his debate with Richard Nixon and contributed to his narrow victory in the presidential election of 1960.) Because of the potential impact and the enormous audience of the debates—some 80 million people watched the single debate between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan in 1980—the campaigns usually undertake intensive negotiations over the number of debates as well as their rules and format [1;1275].

The presidential election is held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. Voters do not actually vote for presidential and vice presidential candidates but rather vote for electors pledged to a particular candidate. The electors gather in their respective state capitals to cast their votes on the Monday following the second Wednesday in December, and the results are formally ratified by Congress in early January.

**Chapter V. The Electoral College**

The question of the manner in which the President was to be elected was debated at great length at the Constitutional Convention of 1787.At one point, the delegates voted for selection by Congress; other proposals considered were for election by: thepeople at large; governors of the several states; electors chosen by state legislatures,and a special group of Members of Congress chosen by lot. Eventually, the matterwas referred to a “committee on postponed matters,” which arrived at a compromise:the Electoral College system. The United States Electoral College is the official name of the group of Presidential Electors who are chosen every four years to cast the electoral vote and thereby elect the President and Vice President of the United States.

Article II, section 1 of the Constitution provides that, “Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States shall be appointed an Elector.” Aside from this disqualification, any person is qualified to be an elector for President and Vice President.

Under the 23rd Amendment, the District of Columbia is allocated as many electors as it would have if it were a state, except that it cannot have more Electors than the least populous state. The least populous state (Wyoming) has 3 Electors, so the District cannot have more than 3 Electors. There are currently 100 Senators and 435 Members of the House of Representatives, so the total membership of both houses of Congress is 535. So the total number of Electors is 538. Therefore, in order to win the Presidency, it is necessary for the successful candidate to gain 270 electoral votes (a majority of 538).

Legislation is currently before Congress which would add a congressional seat to Utah, give Washington DC a voting seat, and would therefore give Utah 1 additional Electoral College vote. The total number of Electoral College votes would then be 539, and a majority would still be 270. The additional congressional seat would be permanent, and reapportioned normally after the 2010 census.

The Constitution does not specify procedures for the nomination of candidates for the office of presidential elector. Presidential Electors are nominated by their state political parties in the summer before the Popular Vote on Election Day. The states have adopted various methods of nomination for elector candidates. In some states, such as Oklahoma, the Electors are nominated in primaries. Other states, such as Virginia and North Carolina, nominate Electors in party conventions. In Pennsylvania, the campaign committees of the candidates name their candidates for Presidential Elector. All states require the names of all Electors to be filed with the Secretary of State at least a month prior to Election Day.

The methods of selecting Electors are various. The current system of choosing Presidential Electors is called the "short ballot." In all states, voters choose among slates of candidates for Elector; only a few states list the names of the Presidential Electors on the ballot. (In some states, if a voter wishes to write in a candidate for president, the voter also is required to write in the names of candidates for Elector.)

Before the advent of the "short ballot" in the early twentieth century, the most common means of electing the Presidential Electors was through the "General Ticket." Voters cast ballots for individuals running for Presidential Elector (in the short ballot voters cast ballots for an entire slate of Electors). In the General Ticket, the state canvass would report the number of votes cast for each candidate for Elector, a complicated process in states like New York with multiple positions to fill. Both the General Ticket and the short ballot are often considered At Large or winner-takes-all voting. The short ballot was adopted by the various states at different times.

By far the most popular method of choosing electors after winner-takes-all is selection by the state legislature.The Constitution gives the power to the state legislatures to decide how electors are chosen, and it is easier (and cheaper) for a state legislature to simply appoint a slate of electors than to create a legislative framework for holding elections to determine the electors. However, appointment by state legislature has a serious flaw, aside from its democratic deficit: legislatures can deadlock more easily than the electorate.

Another method for choosing electors is to divide the state up into electoral districts, and the voters of each district get to choose a single elector, much as states are presently divided into congressional districts for choosing representatives. Obviously, this method is prone to gerrymandering.

The "Maine Method" is a mixture of the district and statewide / short ballot modes of selection. It has this name because it was adopted by Maine for the 1972 presidential election and remains in place. Nebraska has used the Maine Method for presidential elections beginning in 1996 [8].In the Maine Method the votes for president are summed for each congressional district. The party winning each district elects one Presidential Elector. Then the vote is summed for the entire state. The party winning the statewide vote elects two Presidential Electors. The Maine Method is actually very old.

Once the voters have chosen the members of the Electoral College, the electors meet to ratify the popular choices for President and Vice President. The Constitution provides (in the 12th Amendment) that they assemble in their respective states. Congress has established the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December following their election as the date for casting electoral votes, at such place in each state as the legislature directs.

In practice, the electors almost always meet in the state capital, usually at the State House or Capitol Building, often in one of the legislative chambers. The votes are counted and recorded; the results are certified by the Governor and forwarded to the President of the U.S. Senate (the Vice President).

The electoral vote certificates are opened and counted at a joint session of the Congress, held, as mandated, on January 6 following the electors’ meeting (or, by custom, on the next day, if it falls on a Sunday); the Vice President presides. Electoral votes are counted by the newly elected Congress, which convenes on January 3. The winning candidates are then declared to have been elected.

There are a lot of problems with respect to the Electoral College. One of the most urgent is the phenomenon of the faithless elector. This is one who casts an electoral vote for someone other than whom they have pledged to elect. On 158 occasions, electors have cast their votes for president or vice president in a different manner than that prescribed by the legislature of the state they represent.

There are laws to punish faithless electors in 24 states. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of state laws requiring electors to pledge to vote for the winning candidate, as well as remove electors who refuse to pledge. As stated in the ruling, electors are acting as a function of the state, not the federal government. Therefore, states have the right to govern electors. The constitutionality of state laws punishing electors for actually casting a faithless vote, rather than refusing to pledge, has never been decided by the Supreme Court. In any event, a state may only punish a faithless elector after-the-fact; it has no power to change their vote.

One more problem is the existence of unrepresented territories. If an American national is a resident of one of the unincorporated territories of the United States (i.e., American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands), he or she cannot vote for electors for President.

Another charge against the Electoral College points out that it is possible for a presidential candidate to win a plurality of the popular vote but to lose in the Electoral College. This possibility results from two features of the system. First, each state, no matter how small, is guaranteed three electors. Second, the at-large, winner-take-all system means that a victorious candidate, no matter how narrow his margin of victory, is awarded all of a state’s electoral votes.

These problems and many others show that the system of the Electoral College is not perfect, and the question how to channel and organize the popular will remains open.

**Chapter VI. Inauguration**

The formal swearing-in ceremony and inauguration of the new president occurs on January 20 in Washington, D.C. The chief justice of the United States administers the formal oath of office to the president-elect: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” [10] The new president's first speech, called the Inaugural Address, is then delivered to the nation.

In a tradition dating to the 19th century, Presidents are not publicly inauguratedon Sundays. When January 20 falls on that day, a brief private inauguration is held,usually in the East Room of the White House, with a public ceremony the next day.This occurred most recently in 1985, when President Ronald Reagan was privatelyinstalled for his second term on Sunday, January 20, and publicly inaugurated onMonday, January 21. Inauguration Day next falls on a Sunday in the year 2013 [8].

In a tradition dating to Andrew Jackson’s first inaugural in 1829, Presidentswere previously installed at outdoor ceremonies at the East Front of the U.S. Capitol(facing the Supreme Court). Vice Presidents were customarily sworn in the SenateChamber until 1933, when the two ceremonies were held jointly for the first time, apractice which continues.

On seven occasions since 1837, the presidential inaugural has been heldelsewhere than the East Front. In 1909, due to inclement weather, William HowardTaft was installed in the Senate Chamber; in 1945, in consideration of the President’shealth and wartime security demands, Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in for hisfourth term on the South Portico of the White House; in 1981, 1989, 1993, and 1997,Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton were inaugurated at the West Frontof the Capitol (facing the Mall); and in January 1985, due to inclement weather,President Reagan was publicly installed for his second term in the Capitol Rotunda.The West Front venue appears to have gained wide acceptance since 1981, and maybe expected to continue to be the site of future inaugurals, barring unforeseencircumstances [8].

**Conclusion**

Having investigated and traced the history and evolution of the process of presidential elections in the United States of America we have come to the conclusion that it is rather complicated, extensive, well-organized but, of course, not perfect.

The system that governs the election of the President in the USA combines constitutional and statutory requirements, rules of the national and state political parties, political traditions, and contemporary developments and practices.

As initially prescribed by the Constitution, the election of the President was left to electors chosen by the states. Final authority for selecting the President still rests with the Electoral College, which comprises electors from each state equal in number to the state’s total representation in the House and Senate. All but two states award electoral votes on a winner-take-all basis to the candidate with a plurality of the state’s popular vote.

As we can infer from our research the process of electing the President is essentially divided into four stages: (1) the pre-nomination phase, in which candidates compete in state primary elections and caucuses for delegates to the national party conventions; (2) the national conventions - held in the summer of the election year - in which the two major parties nominate candidates for President and Vice President and ratify a platform of the parties’ policy positions and goals; (3) the general election campaign, in which the major party nominees, as well as any minor party or independent contenders, compete for votes from the entire electorate, culminating in the popular vote on election day in November; and (4) the Electoral College phase, in which the President and Vice President are officially elected.

Our investigation proved that the contemporary Electoral College is a curious political institution. Obscure and even unknown to the average citizen, it serves as a crucial mechanism for transforming popular votes cast for President into electoral votes which actually elect the President. However, there are a lot of problems with respect to the Electoral College: for example, the phenomenon of the faithless elector, the existence of unrepresented territories. One more charge against the Electoral College points out that it is possible for a presidential candidate to win a plurality of the popular vote but to lose in the Electoral College. These problems and many others show that the system of the Electoral College is not perfect, and the question how to channel and organize the popular will remains open. Yet, it continues to exist as a central part of American Presidential electoral machinery.

From the information given above and our whole research we can make the conclusion that presidential elections in recent years differ in several important respects from those held earlier in American history. The first is the far wider participation of voters today in determining who the party nominees will be; the political parties have in recent years given a much greater role to party voters in the states in determining the nominees. The second difference involves the role of the electronic media and, most recently, the Internet, both in conveying information to the voters, and shaping the course of the campaign. Third, the financing of presidential campaigns is substantially governed by a system of public funding in the pre-nomination, convention, and general election phases. Thus, contemporary presidential elections in the USA blend both traditional aspects of law and practice and contemporary aspects of a larger, more complex, and more technologically advanced society.

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