**(Key) U.S. Government: Election Process & the Electoral College**

Election Process:

1. **Candidate:** Per Article 2, Section 1: natural born citizen, at least 35 years old, & U.S. resident for at least 14 years.
2. **Primary or Caucus:**
	* Primary: state wide voting where voters use a secret ballot to cast their vote (New Hampshire 1st)
		+ Open= voters can vote in the primary of either party. (Texas)
		+ Closed= voters can only vote with the party they are registered with.
	* Caucus: informal local gathering where voters openly select delegates (Iowa 1st)
3. **National Convention:**
	* Delegates travel to the convention to cast their vote to determine the party nominee.
	* The party nominee then selects their running mate (Vice President).
4. **General Election**
	* Nominees selected by each party convention go head to head.
	* The goal is to win 270 of the 538 electoral votes.
* **Incumbent:** Name recognition, proves winner/leader, easier time raising money, build relationships by working with constituents, bring “pork” projects home to constituents.
* **Challenger:** anti-incumbency sentiment, unproven leader, risk for campaign donors, fresh view on the issues.

**Campaign Finance:**

* Candidates need money to get their message out to the public, achieve name recognition, combat negative ads being run by their opponent, pay campaign staff.
* How do candidates get money?
* Individual donations, Political parties, Interest groups

*Examples of Interest groups:*

* + **PACs:** a type of organization that pools campaign contributions from members and donates those funds to campaign for or against candidates
	+ **527 groups:** tax exempt groups created primarily to influence the selection, nomination, election, appointment or defeat of candidates to federal, state or local public office.
	+ **501C groups**-tax exempt non-profit, supposed to be non-political; don’t have to divulge contributions or donors
* **Citizens United** (2010)-Supreme Court ruled corporate/union funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited under the 1st amendment
	+ Super PACs:
		- Make no contributions to candidates or parties.
		- Spend money independently on elections to advocate for a specific candidate.
		- There are no limits or restrictions on the sources of funds that may be used for these expenditures.



**How many states can each usually party count on?**

Democrats: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Republicans: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Battleground/Swing States: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Electoral College:** Established by Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution.

* + Founding Fathers wanted to the elite to have the final say.
	+ Citizens do not directly elect the president or VP- we elect the electors.
	+ Each state has as many votes as it does Representatives + Senators.
	+ Winner-Take-All system- candidate that wins the popular vote in the state, wins all the states electors; exceptions are Maine & Nebraska which use a tiered system
	+ Pres./VP ticket must win 270 out of 538 available electors (535 + 3 from D.C= 538)
	+ If no candidate gets a majority (270 votes), the House of Representatives votes for president, with each state casting one vote (12th amendment) and the Senate votes for VP, with each senator casting 1 vote

**Timeline**

1. November- vote for President

2. December- Electors go to State Capital to cast ballots for P/VP

3. January- Electoral votes are counted by the sitting VP, in a joint session of Congress

4. January 20th- Inauguration Day