

Electing a President: The Process

1 videocassette.....27 minutes

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INTRODUCTION

Electing a President: The Process tells the story of how Americans choose the person who occupies the highest office in the United States. The video looks at the process from its origins in the Constitution to the election of George W. Bush in 2000. It provides students with the background they need to understand the Electoral College system, political parties, national conventions, party bosses, primaries, debates and the impact of radio and television.

The video makes extensive use of archival prints, film and video footage of different Presidential elections. Graphics clarify key points and interviews with political scientists emphasize important themes.

The video is designed to be used in grades six through eight. It can be used effectively for older students as well.

OBJECTIVES

After viewing this program, students should be able to:

1. Describe the Constitutional requirements a person must satisfy before becoming President.
2. Explain how the Electoral College functions.
3. Describe the role of national political conventions in the election process.
4. Explain the role of primaries.
5. Describe the role of political parties in the election process and how this role has evolved.

6. Describe the changing nature of political campaigns, including the role of the press, campaign styles and political advertising.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The video starts by showing scenes of various campaigns of past Presidential elections. The narrator explains that every four years the United States goes through an elaborate process by which Americans choose who will hold the highest office in their country.

Next the narrator describes how the authors of the Constitution established several simple requirements a person must satisfy to be eligible to be President: He or she must be at least 35 years old, have been born in the United States, and have resided in the United States for at least 14 years.

Robert Spitzer, a political scientist, describes how most of the authors of the Constitution felt that ordinary people were incapable of making wise decisions about who should be President. Consequently, they set up the Electoral College system in which special electors voted for President.

The program goes on to describe how the Electoral College system is still in place and how, when people today vote for President, they are really voting for electors that are pledged to cast their ballots according to how the majority of people in their states voted.

Using the example of the 2000 election, the video looks at “the winner takes all” principle in which a candidate who wins the popular vote in a state – by no matter how thin the margin – wins all that state’s electoral votes. Using the

election between George W. Bush and Albert Gore, it goes on to describe how the Electoral College system makes it possible for someone who loses the popular vote to still win the majority of the electoral votes nationwide and the Presidency. The program focuses on the impact of the ballot dispute in Florida

The program describes how political parties did not play a role in the election of George Washington. Judith Best, a political scientist, describes the differences between partisanship and statesmanship.

Next, the program notes how political parties developed by 1796 when John Adams, a Federalist, ran against Thomas Jefferson, a Democrat-Republican. The video describes how party politics have been part of the election process ever since. Someone who wants to become President must first win his or her party's nomination. For a long time, this nomination was determined by a small number of party bosses who controlled the selection process at national party conventions.

The program then describes how in recent years party primaries have let ordinary Republicans and Democrats have a say about who will be their party's candidate. The video uses the 2000 primaries as an example, showing how Bush overcame John McCain's early victory in the New Hampshire primary to win the Republican nomination.

The video goes on to describe the contest between Bush, Gore and Ralph Nader. But then the program goes back to the election of George Washington to show how campaigning for the Presidency has changed. Washington ran without opposition and didn't campaign at all. Many candidates after Washington let their supporters campaign for them. The video describes how Stephen Douglas broke from

tradition in 1860 by campaigning nationwide by train. It goes on to describe how whistle-stop campaigns continued to be popular through the election of Harry Truman in 1948.

Next, the video looks at the impact of radio and television on the election process, giving as examples FDR's use of radio to reach millions of voters in 1932, Nixon's "Checkers" speech in 1952, the Nixon-Kennedy debates in 1960 and recent political advertising on television.

Robert Spitzer argues that television has helped take power away from the political parties in the decision-making process. Candidates make appeals directly to voters.

Judith Best argues that television trivializes the election process by focusing people's attention on a candidate's image rather than important issues.

The program notes that all American Presidents have been white males and almost all have been Protestant. John Kennedy, in fact, was the first Catholic President. Part of the reason why Presidents have not reflected the diversity of people in the United States is that many people were restricted from voting. The video describes how women and minorities gradually won this right. The video then notes that long-held assumptions about who can become President have been changing. Geraldine Ferrara was a candidate for Vice President in 1984. Jesse Jackson was a serious African American contender for the Democratic nomination in 1988. Joseph Lieberman was the first Jewish candidate for vice President in 2000.

A summary of key points ends the program.

ABOUT THE EXPERTS INTERVIEWED

JUDITH BEST (Ph.D. Cornell, 1971) is Distinguished Teaching Professor of Political Science at the State University of New York at Cortland and the author of *The Choice of the People? Debating the Electoral College*. She has testified before The House Judiciary Subcommittee On The Constitution.

ROBERT J. SPITZER (Ph.D. Cornell, 1980) is Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the State University of New York at Cortland. His books include *The Presidency and Public Policy* (1983), *The Presidential Veto* (1988), *The Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution* (1990), *President and Congress* (1993) and *Essentials of American Politics* (co-authored, 2002). He currently serves as president of the Presidency Research Group of the American Political Science Association.

BEFORE SHOWING THE VIDEO

The video covers a lot of territory, from the writing of the Constitution to the Presidency of George W. Bush. In some cases the information is presented chronologically. In other places, however, the information is organized around themes such as the right to vote.

To help students keep track of when various events occurred, you can photocopy and hand out the Chronology of Events in the Appendix or copy it onto a blackboard. Students can look at this chronology before viewing the video or as they watch it.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the Constitutional requirements a person must meet in order to become President?
A person must be at least 35 years old, have been born in the United States, and have been a resident of this country for at least 14 years.
2. What is the Electoral College system?
The system established by the Constitution in which specially selected electors vote for President.
3. How are electors chosen today? How is this different from how electors were chosen in the earliest days of our nation?
Today, electors from a state are chosen on the basis of how people in that state vote in a Presidential election. When people in a state vote for a Presidential candidate, they are really voting for electors who are pledged to vote for the candidate of their choice. In the early days of the nation, electors in each state were not chosen on the basis of how people voted. Instead, they were chosen by the state legislature.
4. What determines the number of electors a state has?
The number is equal to the number of a state's senators and representatives in Congress. Since the number of a state's representatives is based on its population, states with a large number of people have more electors than less populous states.
5. What is the "winner takes all" principle in regard to which Presidential candidate gets a state's electoral votes?

In most states, the candidate who gets the most popular votes gets all of that state's electoral votes.

6. How is it possible for a candidate to lose the popular vote and still win the electoral vote?

A candidate can win, by a small margin, several large states with many electoral votes. Since the candidate then gets all of the electoral votes from these states, the candidate may then get the majority of electoral votes nationwide.

7. What are national party conventions?

Conventions held every four years at which delegates meet to decide on who will be their party's candidate for President.

8. What are party bosses?

Powerful individuals in a party who, in the past, largely determined among themselves who their party's candidate would be. Delegates at national party conventions often voted according to the wishes of bosses. Today, bosses have less influence.

9. What are primaries?

Elections in different states in which ordinary Republicans and Democrats can vote on whom they would like to see as their party's candidate.

10. When did white women win the right to vote?

In 1920, when an amendment to the Constitution guaranteed that the right to vote could not be denied a person because of sex.

11. When were African Americans and other minorities finally guaranteed the right to vote?

When the Voting Rights Act became law in 1965. (In spite of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of 1870, giving all citizens the right to vote no matter “their race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” true voting privileges were not actually achieved until 1965.)

12. Why was Florida’s role critical in the 2000 election?
George W. Bush beat Albert Gore in Florida by approximately 500 votes as a result of a controversial decision by the Supreme Court to end the recounting of contested ballots. As a result, Bush won all of Florida’s electoral votes, and this was enough to guarantee him a majority of electoral votes nationwide.

ACTIVITIES

1. The program briefly describes several election contests, including John Adams versus Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson versus John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln versus Stephen Douglas, Richard Nixon versus John Kennedy and George W. Bush versus Albert Gore.

Ask students to research and report in more detail on one of these contests or some other contest not described in the video. (See Appendix B for a list of winners and losers in every Presidential election through 2000). Their report might focus on some or all of the following questions:

- What were the main issues of the election?
 - How did the candidates campaign?
 - What were the candidates' strengths and weaknesses?
 - Did the candidates appeal to different types of voters? If so, why?
 - What were the results of the popular and electoral votes?
2. The program describes the Electoral College and how this system has not always worked well. For instance, in several elections the candidate getting the most popular votes was defeated because he failed to get a majority of the electoral votes.

Many people have proposed doing away with the Electoral College system and having the President elected directly by the people. Others argue that despite its flaws, the Electoral College system has some benefits. Under this system, for example, even the smallest states

are guaranteed at least three electoral votes and therefore some influence in the election.

Ask students to research the pros and cons of the Electoral College system in more detail. Students could be divided into two teams to debate whether this system should be abolished.

3. The video mentions the impact of television advertising on elections.

Ask students to research the effect of such advertising in an election of the last 30 years. (Johnson versus Goldwater and Bush versus Dukakis would be good choices.) Did negative campaigning play a role in the advertising?

4. The video describes the Nixon-Kennedy debates of 1960.

Ask students to research and report on another series of debates in a more recent election. Questions they might consider include:

- What were the main issues of the debates?
- Did the debates have an effect on the elections? If so, how?
- What was the format of the debates? Was this format effective in terms of helping voters make informed choices?
- How might Presidential debates be organized in the future?

5. The video describes how the Constitution includes some requirements that a person must meet before becoming President. (A President must be at least 35 years old,

have been born in this country, and have lived in this country at least 14 years.)

Ask students to research the requirements for being the leader of another country – Prime Minister of Great Britain or Canada, for example. Students can then report on how the requirements for being President of the United States compare to the requirements for being the leader of another country.

6. The Constitution establishes a term of office of four years but originally did not establish any restrictions on how many times a President could serve. After two terms, however, George Washington declined to serve a third. He set a precedent that no President should serve more than two terms. This precedent lasted until Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who served three full terms and part of a fourth. After Roosevelt's death, Congress passed the Twenty-second Amendment to the Constitution, which prevents any person from being elected President more than twice.

Students could research and report on the controversy following Roosevelt's decision to seek more than two terms of office. As part of their report they can describe how the Twenty-second Amendment to the Constitution came about after Roosevelt's death.

7. Ask students to research and report on the 2000 election, particularly the role of Florida. Some argue that the Supreme Court's intervention was in the national interest because it prevented the chaos that might have occurred if the outcome of the election continued to be in doubt. Others feel that it was an unwarranted intrusion that prevented the will of the majority of voters from being heard.

GLOSSARY

Boss: A leader in a political party, who has a great deal of power.

Candidate: A person who seeks or is nominated for the Presidency or other political office.

Convention: A meeting of a political party at which a candidate is chosen to run for President.

Delegate: A representative to a convention.

Democratic Party: One of two major political parties that exist today.

Democratic-Republicans: A political party first organized before the election of 1796. Democratic-Republicans favored strong state governments over a strong national government.

Electoral College: The body of electors, from all states, that every four years elect the President and Vice-President.

Electors: Persons chosen by voters in each state to elect the President and Vice-President.

Federal: Having to do with a governing system where states are joined under one central government but have some governing powers themselves.

Federalists: A political party first organized before the election of 1796. Federalists believed in a strong national government.

Inauguration: The formal ceremony at which a President takes the oath of office. It marks the beginning of a President's term in office.

Nominate: To propose as a candidate.

Partisanship: Devotion to the support of a party or group.

Political party: A political group organized to support candidates for public office.

Primary: A preliminary election in which members of a political party vote for their choice to be their party's candidate for President.

Republican Party: One of the two major political parties that exist today.

Statesman: Political leader regarded as a promoter of the public good, rather than for the benefit of a particular party.

United States Constitution: The document, drafted in 1787 and adopted in 1789, that sets out the structure, processes and functions of the federal government. It establishes the powers of each branch of the federal government.

Whistle-stop campaign: A campaign in which the candidate travels from place to place by train, speaking at each stop from the back of the last car.

White House: The official residence of the President.

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New York: Atheneum, 1988.

WEB SITES OF INTEREST

Federal Elections Commission, United States of America
<http://www.fec.gov>

This Nation, Online Guide to American Government &
Politics
<http://www.thisnation.com>

United States Archives, Digital Classroom
http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/index.html

United States Library of Congress, The Learning Page
(Especially For Teachers)
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/index.html>

United States Printing Office Guide to Government for
Students, Parents and Teachers
<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/>

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APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1787: Constitution written

1789: George Washington inaugurated as first President

1796: John Adams, a Federalist, runs against Thomas Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican

1828: Andrew Jackson runs against John Quincy Adams

1840: William Henry Harrison campaigns for Presidency

1860: Abraham Lincoln runs against Stephen Douglas

1868: Horatio Seymour drafted unwillingly by Democrats but loses election to Ulysses S. Grant

1888: Benjamin Harrison wins over Grover Cleveland even though Cleveland wins more popular votes

1920: Warren Harding chosen by Republican party bosses and wins election

1932: Franklin Delano Roosevelt uses radio in his first bid to win Presidency

1948: Harry Truman uses whistle-stop campaign

1952: Dwight Eisenhower runs against Adlai Stevenson. Conventions are the first to be televised. Richard Nixon goes on television to defend himself in “Checkers” speech and is kept as Eisenhower’s running mate

1960: Richard Nixon runs against John F. Kennedy. First televised debates.

1992: William Clinton defeats George Bush.

2000: George W. Bush defeats Albert Gore

APPENDIX B: PRESIDENTIAL CONTESTS

<u>Year</u>	<u>President elected</u>	<u>Losing Candidate</u>
1789	George Washington	No opposing candidate
1792	George Washington	No opposing candidate
1796	John Adams Federalist	Thomas Jefferson Democratic-Republican
1800	Thomas Jefferson Democratic-Republican	Aaron Burr Federalist
1804	Thomas Jefferson Democratic-Republican	Charles Pinckney Federalist
1808	James Madison Democratic-Republican	Charles Pinckney Federalist
1812	James Madison Democratic-Republican	DeWitt Clinton Federalist
1816	James Monroe Democratic-Republican	Rufus King Federalist
1820	James Monroe Democratic-Republican	John Quincy Adams Democratic-Republican
1824	John Quincy Adams Democratic-Republican	Andrew Jackson Democratic-Republican
		Henry Clay Democratic-Republican
		William H. Crawford Democratic-Republican

1828	Andrew Jackson Democrat	John Quincy Adams National Republican
1832	Andrew Jackson Democrat	Henry Clay National Republican
1836	Martin Van Buren Democrat	William H. Harrison Whig
1840	William H. Harrison Whig	Martin Van Buren Democrat
1844	James K. Polk Democrat	Henry Clay Whig
1848	Zachary Taylor Whig	Lewis Cass Democrat
1852	Franklin Pierce Democrat	Winfield Scott Whig
1856	James C. Buchanan Democrat	John C. Fremont Republican
1860	Abraham Lincoln Republican	Stephen A. Douglas Democrat
		John C. Breckinridge Democrat
		John Bell Constitutional Union
1864	Abraham Lincoln Republican	George McClellan Democrat
1868	Ulysses S. Grant Republican	Horatio Seymour Democrat

1872	Ulysses S. Grant Republican	Horace Greeley Democrat/Liberal Republican
1876	Rutherford B. Hayes Republican	Samuel J. Tilden Democrat
1880	James A. Garfield Republican	Winfield S. Hancock Democrat
1884	Grover Cleveland Democrat	James G. Blaine Republican
1888	Benjamin Harrison Republican	Grover Cleveland Democrat
1892	Grover Cleveland Democrat	Benjamin Harrison Republican
		James Weaver People's Party
1896	William McKinley Republican	William J. Bryan Democrat People's Party
1900	William McKinley Republican	William J. Bryan Democrat
1904	Theodore Roosevelt Republican	Alton B. Parker Democrat
1908	William H. Taft Republican	William J. Bryan Democrat

1912	Woodrow Wilson Democrat	Theodore Roosevelt Progressive
		William H. Taft Republican
1916	Woodrow Wilson Democrat	Charles E. Hughes Republican
1920	Warren G. Harding Republican	James M. Cox Democrat
1924	Calvin Coolidge Republican	John W. Davis Democrat
		Robert M. LaFollette Progressive
1928	Herbert Hoover Republican	Alfred E. Smith Democrat
1932	Franklin D. Roosevelt Democrat	Herbert Hoover Republican
		Norman Thomas Socialist
1936	Franklin D. Roosevelt Democrat	Alfred Landon Republican
1940	Franklin D. Roosevelt Democrat	Wendell Wilkie Republican
1944	Franklin D. Roosevelt Democrat	Thomas E. Dewey Republican

1948	Harry S. Truman Democrat	Thomas E. Dewey Republican
		J. Strom Thurmond State's Rights
		Henry A. Wallace Progressive
1952	Dwight D. Eisenhower Republican	Adlai Stevenson Democrat
1956	Dwight D. Eisenhower Republican	Adlai Stevenson Democrat
1960	John F. Kennedy Democrat	Richard M. Nixon Republican
1964	Lyndon B. Johnson Democrat	Barry M. Goldwater Republican
1968	Richard M. Nixon Republican	Hubert H. Humphrey Democrat
		George Wallace Progressive
1972	Richard M. Nixon Republican	George McGovern Democrat
1976	Jimmy Carter Democrat	Gerald R. Ford Republican
1980	Ronald Reagan Republican	Jimmy Carter Democrat
		John B. Anderson Independent

1984	Ronald Reagan Republican	Walter F. Mondale Democrat
1988	George Bush Republican	Michael S. Dukakis Democrat
1992	William Clinton Democrat	George Bush Republican
		Ross Perot Independent
1996	William Clinton Democrat	Robert Dole Republican
		Ross Perot Independent
2000	George W. Bush Republican	Albert Gore Democrat
		Ralph Nader Green Party

SCRIPT

Narrator

Every four years in the United States a remarkable contest takes place.

The contenders in this contest travel all across the country.

They meet thousands of people...

and they give hundreds of speeches.

They engage in debates...

and spend millions of dollars on television commercials.

They are vying for the support and votes of the American people, and the stakes are high;

for the winner attains the most powerful position in the United States and probably the world...

the Presidency of the United States.

Title: *Electing a President: The Process*

To understand the history of how we elect our President, we need to go back over 200 years. In 1787, delegates from 12 of the 13 original states gathered in Philadelphia.

There they wrote the Constitution, the document that outlines how our country is governed.

The Constitution established a few rules about who can be President. According to the Constitution, a President has to be at least 35 years old.

A President has to have been born in the United States.

And a President has to have lived in this country for at least 14 years.

That's it...only three simple things that are required by law.

But while millions of Americans meet these legal requirements, only one is elected. Becoming President is not easy; and the process has changed somewhat since the Constitution was written over 200 years ago.

For example, we now take it for granted that the American people choose their President by going to the polls and voting.

But in 1787, many of the delegates who wrote the Constitution didn't trust most people to vote wisely.

So the authors of the Constitution decided that in each state only specially selected officials called "electors", could vote for President. They called these electors together the Electoral College.

Robert Spitzer

There certainly was a suspicion about too much democracy. Many of the founders commented about this fact. And they were greatly concerned that the general population could not be trusted to directly make a choice, for example, of President. That's one reason why we have an Electoral College...because of a sense that if the people have an opportunity to judge directly, they're liable to make a wrong judgment.

Narrator

The Constitution also determined that the number of electors for each state was to be equal to the number of its senators and representatives in Congress.

Since the number of representatives of a state is based on its population, states like Pennsylvania with a large number of people had more electoral votes than states like Georgia, with fewer people.

In the beginning, electors in most states were chosen by the state legislature. The people had no say whatsoever.

Today, while people can vote for President, the Electoral College system is still in place. When people vote, they are actually voting for electors who are pledged to vote for the candidate they want.

The number of electoral votes each state has is still determined by how many people it has. In the 2000 election, for example, California, the state with the most people, had 54 electors.

Wyoming--with very few people living in it--had only three electoral votes.

In most states, whoever wins most of the people's votes gets all of that state's electoral votes. Take Pennsylvania in the 2000 election. Pennsylvania had 23 electoral votes.

Albert Gore won 51% of the votes cast by people going to the polls. George W. Bush won 46%, and the third candidate, Ralph Nader, had 2%. But even though Gore won only slightly more than half the popular votes, the votes cast by citizens, he got all of Pennsylvania's 23 electoral votes.

Nation-wide, however, Bush won 32 states with 271 electoral votes to Gore's 18 states with 266 electoral votes. Bush's total was more than the majority of electoral votes nation-wide that a candidate must get in order to become President.

The 2000 election, however, illustrates how the Electoral College system has led to some pretty strange results. More people across the country voted for Gore than for Bush. In fact, Gore had more than 500,000 votes more than Bush.

But Bush won--by a small margin--the popular vote in several key states and consequently received all of their electoral votes.

Florida, in particular, made a critical difference. The final official tally showed Bush beating Gore by only about 500 votes out of the almost 6 million votes cast.

The Florida results were disputed for weeks as Gore demanded a recount of the votes cast in several Florida counties.

For several weeks after the November election, Americans still did not know who their next President would be as officials laboriously examined disputed ballots.

Finally, in a controversial decision, the Supreme Court intervened and stopped the recounting.

As a result, all of Florida's 25 electoral votes went to Bush, and because of this he was able to win by a very slim margin the majority of the electoral votes nation-wide.

While the Electoral College system is still in place, there have been changes in how people have run for President.

For example, today candidates almost always have the backing of a political party. For many years, the two main parties have been the Republicans and the Democrats.

However, when George Washington was elected our first President in 1788, there were no political parties.

The framers of the Constitution disapproved of political parties because they thought they would lead to partisanship, the support of a single party rather than the good of the whole country.

Instead, they supported statesmanship, which they thought was best exemplified by Washington.

Judith Best

They thought that the statesman was the man who rose above partisan factions.... as sort of the father of the country idea because of the role of the father is to let us all reason together, let us bring the family together, let us find a consensus and that the statesman is the man who looks to the good of the whole country, not to the good of a part of the country, the partisan position.

Narrator

By the election of 1796, which pitted John Adams against Thomas Jefferson, political parties had been formed by people who had different ideas about the role of the federal government.

Jefferson and his supporters were called Democratic-Republicans. They didn't want a strong federal government because they felt that states should have more power to govern.

John Adams and his supporters were called Federalists. Federalists believed that the national government should be very strong. Adams won the election, although Jefferson and his Democratic-Republicans would win four years later.

By the 1830's and 40's, delegates from all states would gather at national conventions to decide on their party's candidate for President. But these delegates had little say

about who the candidate would be. The conventions were usually controlled by party bosses who told the delegates how to vote.

Sometimes even the candidate had little to say. In 1868, the Democratic Party bosses decided that Horatio Seymour should be their candidate, even though Seymour had told them he didn't want to be.

After Seymour left the convention hall one night, the bosses quickly nominated him, and the delegates voted unanimously in his favor. The bosses then ended the convention before Seymour could turn the nomination down.

When Seymour heard that he had been nominated, he reportedly broke down in tears. Seymour, however, was spared being President because he lost the election to Ulysses S. Grant.

Political bosses also played a pivotal role in the 1920 Republican convention in Chicago. When the delegates couldn't agree on a candidate, a small number of party bosses met in a hotel room.

There they decided among themselves that Warren Harding should be the Republican candidate. Harding was then elected by the delegates on the convention floor and went on to become President.

Throughout the 1930's, 40's and 50's conventions continued to be largely controlled by party bosses. The delegates to these conventions had little real power.

Ordinary citizens had even less. The way candidates were chosen at national conventions offered Democrats and

Republicans alike little say about who would be their party's candidate for President.

But the way parties choose their candidates has changed. Today, many states have special elections called primaries in which ordinary Republicans and Democrats can vote on whom they would like as their party's candidate for President.

In early 2000, for example, there were several different people who wanted to be the Republican candidate.

Each of them had to appeal for the votes of Republicans in states that held primaries. This meant seeking the support of ordinary citizens.

In the New Hampshire primary, John McCain, a senator from Arizona, won by a comfortable margin over George W. Bush, Steve Forbes, and several others.

But Bush won several important primaries after that, and eventually most of the other contenders dropped out of the race.

Bush's good showing in the primaries insured that by the time of the national Republican convention in June, enough delegates were pledged to him to lock up his party's nomination.

In recent years, the primaries have usually determined who will be a party's candidate long before the convention even starts. But conventions serve other purposes.

For both Bush and his Democratic opponent Al Gore, the national party convention was an opportunity to get a lot of publicity, particularly when giving the speech accepting the party's nomination.

Gore, who had been Vice President under Bill Clinton, stressed his experience, while Bush argued that the country needed a change.

(Bush) “This administration had its chance. They have not led. We will.”

After the conventions the campaign quickly intensified as Bush, Gore, and Green Party candidate Ralph Nader crisscrossed the country looking for support from voters.

Before the election in November the candidates met with thousands of people and gave hundreds of speeches in a non-stop effort to win the Presidency. But running for President wasn't always like this.

Our first President, George Washington, didn't campaign at all. In fact, in many ways Washington was reluctant to be President. On the day of his inauguration, when he was sworn in as President, Washington confided his misgivings to a friend.

(Washington) “My feelings upon assuming this office are not unlike those of a culprit going to the place of execution.”

For many years after Washington, candidates felt it was undignified to campaign. When John Quincy Adams, the son of John Adams, ran for a second term as President in 1828, he didn't campaign at all. He let most of his supporters campaign for him.

(Adams) “If my country wants me, she should ask for me.”

Adam's opponent was Andrew Jackson, a war hero who had helped defeat the British at the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812.

Adam's supporters, however, described Jackson as a gambler, drunkard, and thief. It was one of the first examples of negative campaigning, where a candidate attacks the character and judgment of his opponent.

Despite the attacks on his character, Jackson was able to win by appealing to thousands of ordinary citizens who up to that time had not been able to vote.

When Jackson was sworn in as President, it was declared a victory for democracy.

Jackson's victory marked a turning point in American politics. From then on, people running for President tried to appeal to a larger number of voters. To do this, often a candidate would claim that he came from a humble and poor background.

Take William Henry Harrison in the election of 1840. Harrison was wealthy and had been raised by a well-off Southern planter.

But Harrison's campaign portrayed him as someone who had been born in a log cabin. The idea was to build an image of him as plain and down-to-earth.

In the election of 1860, the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, was born in a log cabin. Lincoln made no speeches and stayed home in Springfield, Illinois. Like other candidates before him, he let supporters campaign for him.

But Lincoln's opponent, Stephen Douglas, chose a different strategy. Instead of staying at home, he became the first Presidential candidate to campaign extensively throughout the nation. Although Douglas lost the election, he changed forever how people ran for President.

Douglas was able to tour the United States because by 1860 many new railroads had been built that linked different parts of the country.

Railroads made possible what is called a whistle-stop campaign. In a whistle-stop campaign, the candidate's train would pull into town and blow its whistle to announce its arrival.

The candidate would then speak from the back of the last car. At the end of the speech, the train would pull out of the station to go on to the next campaign stop.

The last candidate to campaign extensively this way was Harry Truman in 1948. Truman made up to 20 speeches a day from his train, called the "Truman Special."

But even before Truman, the invention of the radio allowed a candidate to speak to a far larger number of voters.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran for President in 1932, he could speak not only to the people in an auditorium or convention hall where he was making the speech but also to millions of radio listeners all across the country. Roosevelt used radio to convince voters that he would be the best person to lead the country out of the Great Depression, the worst economic crisis in the nation's history.

Twenty years later, in 1952, when Dwight Eisenhower ran against Adlai Stevenson, another invention once again changed American politics. That year, for the first time, the Republican and Democratic conventions were televised.

The power of television to influence voters became obvious later in that same election. Eisenhower's running mate, Richard Nixon, was accused of improperly accepting gifts

and money from several wealthy supporters and using the money for his personal expenses.

But Nixon went on national television to defend himself.

(Nixon) “Not one cent of the \$18,000 or any other money of that type ever went to me for my personal use.”

Nixon also talked about his humble upbringing and even mentioned one of the gifts given him by a supporter...a dog named Checkers. His speech thereafter was known as the “Checkers speech.”

Nixon’s appearance on television was a great success. People all across the country expressed their support and sympathy for Nixon, and Eisenhower kept him as his Vice Presidential running mate.

Eight years later, however, television hurt Nixon when he ran for President in a close race against John Kennedy. Nixon and Kennedy had a series of televised debates.

Kennedy came across as being relaxed, youthful, and in command.

(Kennedy) “Abraham Lincoln said the question was whether this nation could exist half slave or half free.”

Nixon, who had just recovered from an operation, appeared tired and nervous.

Judith Best

He refused makeup, and Kennedy, of course, did not. And I think that perhaps Kennedy understood the power of television far more than Nixon did.

Narrator

Kennedy won the election in one of the closest races in American history. Many historians have felt that Nixon might have won, except for the debates.

Since the Nixon-Kennedy race, it has become common for candidates to meet in televised debates. These debates have often given people their best opportunity to see the candidates discuss and argue, face-to-face, important issues like the economy and relations with other countries.

Robert Spitzer

For one thing, television makes Presidential politics and Presidential elections much more personal. It focuses much more on the traits of the individual running for office.

Secondly, television has helped take power away from the political parties in the decision-making process. Candidates go out directly making appeals to voters when they're trying to win a nomination or trying to be elected President, and they're relying much less on traditional political party organizations and political party resources to win an election.

Narrator

Television has changed Presidential politics in still another way. Millions of dollars are spent by both Republicans and Democrats on television ads to reach voters throughout the country.

But many people complain that these ads try mainly to build a candidate's image as a family man or a strong leader rather than explain his views on different issues.

Judith Best

Television, I think, trivializes the political process because it focuses on image rather than issues. It matters on television if you're photogenic. It matters on television if you have a pleasing face, if you have a calming voice.

I think that there were a series of extraordinarily fine candidates who were elected in the past who would not have been elected in modern times; and the one who comes most to mind is Abraham Lincoln whom, I'm told, had a rather high, piercing voice and was considered ugly by a lot of the people of his time.

Narrator

There have been other criticisms about the Presidential election process. If we look back over the last two hundred years at the people who have become President, we see that all of them shared certain characteristics.

The most obvious is that up to now all Presidents have been men. All our Presidents have been white.

And there have been other similarities that can't be seen in pictures and films. All Presidents have been Christians and almost all have been Protestant. It was only in 1960 that we elected our first Catholic President, John Kennedy.

Many people complain that while the United States is a country of men and women of many cultures, races, and religions, the leaders we choose don't reflect this diversity.

Part of the reason is that for a long time most Americans didn't have any say in choosing their President.

We saw earlier that when the Constitution was written in 1787, most of its authors didn't trust the American people

to make wise choices. For this reason, they set up the Electoral College system in which electors from each state voted on who would be President.

Gradually, electors in all states were selected on the basis of how people voted, but not all people.

Robert Spitzer

The voting population consisted of white male property owners, which in practical terms amounted to less than 10% of the adult population of the United States. So voting was very restricted in the early decades of our country's history.

Narrator

It wasn't until about 1828 that most white men could vote...no matter how rich or poor.

Their wives and daughters, however, had to wait much longer for this privilege. It took until 1920 before the Constitution was amended, or changed, so that the right to vote could not be denied a person on the basis of being female.

While being a woman could no longer prevent a person from voting, race could. It would take years of organizing, marching, and protesting before African American men and women would be able to vote freely.

It wasn't until 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act, that African Americans were finally able to have a real say in choosing their President.

Just as more people can vote, long-held views about who can become President have also begun to change.

For example, in 1984 Democrat Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to be the Vice-Presidential candidate of a major party.

Four years later, in 1988, Democrat Jesse Jackson was a serious contender to be the first African American candidate for President.

And in 2000, Albert Gore's running mate, Joseph Lieberman, was the first Jewish candidate for the vice Presidency.

Robert Spitzer

I think that the idea that someone might not want to vote for somebody because they are black or because they are Latino ...I think those ideas are vanishing, and I think the day will come when we will have a female President, an ethnic President, Presidents from backgrounds different from what we have seen up until now.

Narrator

In this program, we've seen how the authors of the Constitution set up the Electoral College system by which special electors vote for President...

We also saw how the number of electors each state has depends on how many people live there.

Today, when people vote for President, they are really voting for electors who are pledged to cast their ballots according to how people in their state voted.

We looked at how people wanting to become President have usually had the backing of a political party.

We examined the role of party conventions, and we saw how for a long time they were dominated by party bosses who determined among themselves who the candidate would be.

But we also saw how the process has changed to give ordinary citizens a greater say.

Today, Presidential hopefuls must win support in primary elections before they can become their parties' candidates.

We've seen how campaigning for the Presidency has changed over the years. For many years, candidates like Abraham Lincoln stayed home and let others campaign for them.

But when more railroads were built, candidates could crisscross the country in whistle-stop campaigns.

We saw, too, how radio made it possible for candidates to reach millions of listeners across the country and how television forever changed American politics.

We looked at how, in the early days of the United States, not all people had the right to vote and how gradually more and more people won this right.

Finally, we saw how our views about who can become President are changing so that in the future, it may be possible for men and women of all races and religions to occupy the highest office in the United States.

END