

Parties, Interest Groups, and Public Policy

Political parties and interest groups: How do they influence our political decisions?

Vocabulary Terms

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers:

political party	political action committee (PAC)
interest group	lobbying
platform	public policy
two-party system	pluralism

PREVIEW

If you were to register for a political party right now, which would you choose?

- Democrat
- Republican
- independent (no party affiliation)
- third party (Green Party, Libertarian, or the like)

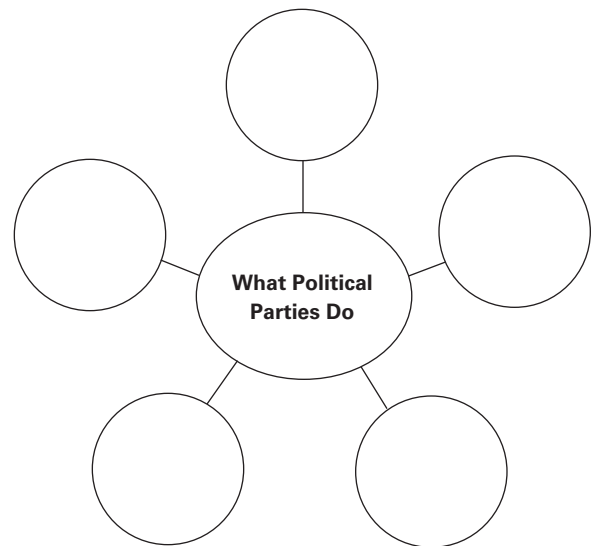
What are some of the reasons for your choice?

READING NOTES

Section 1

Read the section, and then do the following:

1. Create a spoke diagram outlining what political parties do in a democracy. Off each spoke, write one function of political parties. Your diagram must have at least four spokes.



2. What was the major dividing factor between the two first political parties, the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans?
3. Create a T-chart with the headings "Democrats" and "Republicans." List at least four beliefs held by each party.
4. What function do third parties serve in American politics?
5. Create a simple symbol or illustration to represent independent voters. Then write one sentence describing independents.

Section 2

Create a T-chart titled “Opinions on Special Interests” with the headings “Good for Democracy” and “Bad for Democracy.” Record at least eight examples of how interest groups are good or bad for democracy.

Section 3

A mnemonic is a memory device used to recall a variety of things, including a list of items or the steps required to complete a task. For example, **Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally (Parenthesis Exponents Multiplication Division Addition Subtraction)** is used to help remember the order in which to complete mathematical operations.

Create a mnemonic for the six steps of the policy-making process. Then, explain which step in the process you think is the most important and which is the least important.

P R O C E S S I N G

Now that you have looked more closely at political parties and their function in government, choose the political party that you would like to be affiliated with. If you haven’t already registered to vote, obtain a voter registration form (or a pre-registration form, if you are not yet 18) from your local town or city hall.

Once you have selected a party or chosen to register as an independent with no party affiliation, answer these questions:

- Why did you choose your particular affiliation?
- Why are parties important in government?
- What can parties do for you? For society?