

OneVote Lesson Plan Part 1: Political Parties

Objectives

Students will:

- compare and contrast the Democratic and Republican parties.
- determine which political party they are most closely affiliated with.
- work collaboratively to create a party platform.

Warm-up

Take an informal student poll students by asking for a show of hands: Are you a Democrat? Are you a Republican? Not sure?

Ask students to brainstorm what they know about the Democratic Party and the Republican Parties; record answers on the board. Inform class you will revisit this list later.

Words in the News

Review these key terms with students.

- **Political party:** A group of people who share the same beliefs about the way a country should be run. The aim of a political party is to elect officials who will try to carry out those shared beliefs.
- **Two-Party System:** A political system consisting chiefly of two political parties (such as Democratic and Republican) that dominate the government.
- **Democratic Party:** The oldest existing political party, Democrats tend to be more liberal on social issues, and believe the government should take an active role in providing for people in need.
 - **Famous Democratic Presidents:** Andrew Jackson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Jr., Bill Clinton and Barack Obama
- **Republican Party:** Formed in 1854, Republicans tend to take a more conservative stand on social issues, favoring lower taxes and less government spending on social programs.
 - **Famous Republican Presidents:** Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George Bush
- **Liberals:** Believe in government-funded programs to provide support for people in need, programs to promote social good and greater freedom in political and religious matters.

- **Conservatives:** Believe in personal responsibility, traditional American values and a strong national defense.
 - **Note: The terms “left” and “right”** refer to opposite ends of the political spectrum. Liberals are referred to as the left or left-wing; conservatives are the right or right-wing.

- **Third parties:** Smaller, alternative political parties, such as the Libertarian Party and Green Party. Third-party candidates typically receive much smaller percentages of votes during presidential elections.

Survey

Students complete the [ISideWith.com](https://www.SideWith.com) Political Party survey to determine their political affiliation.

Students record their results to the following questions:

- Overall result: Which candidate do you side with? Which political party is this candidate a member of?
- Which political party do you side with on foreign policy issues?
- Which political party do you side with on economic issues?
- Which political party do you side with on social issues?

Collaborate

Group students together, based on their Overall Party results. Students work together to create a brief written party platform, highlighting their group’s key beliefs in important issues. Groups can refer to this “[Democrat vs. Republican Comparison Chart](#)” for ideas.

Share student responses, creating a class chart to record responses for each party. Compare responses to original brainstorm lists.

Discuss

What are the key differences between Democrats and Republicans?

Reflect

Write a one-paragraph reflection about your Political Party Survey results. Where do you fit politically overall? On economic issues? On social issues? Are these results what you expected? Why or why not?

Share

Ask for a few student volunteers to share responses.