

Participation, Campaigns & Elections

Lowi, Chapter 11

Political action committee (PAC) – The political arm of an interest group that is legally entitled to raise funds on a voluntary basis from members, stockholders, or employees to contribute funds to candidates or political parties.

Super PACs -- a new kind of political action committee created in July 2010 following the outcome of a federal court case known as *SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission*. Technically known as independent expenditure-only committees, Super PACs may raise unlimited sums of money from corporations, unions, associations and individuals, then spend unlimited sums to overtly advocate for or against political candidates. Super PACs must, however, report their donors to the Federal Election Commission on a monthly or quarterly basis -- the Super PAC's choice -- as a traditional PAC would. Unlike traditional PACs, Super PACs are prohibited from donating money directly to political candidates. (from OpenSecrets.org)

Leadership PAC – A PAC formed by an officeholder that collects contributions from individuals and other PACs and then makes contributions to other candidates and political parties.

Bundling – A tactic in which PACs collect contributions from like-minded individuals (each limited to \$2000) and present them to a candidate or political party as a “bundle,” thus increasing the PAC’s influence.

Hard money – Political contributions given to a party, candidate, or interest group that are limited in amounts and fully disclosed. Raising such limited funds is harder than raising unlimited funds, hence the term “hard money.”

Soft money – Unlimited amounts of money that political parties previously could raise for party-building purposes. Now largely illegal except for limited contributions to state and local parties for voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

Quid pro quo – Something given with the expectation of receiving something in return.

Independent expenditures – The Supreme Court has ruled that individuals, corporations, groups, and parties can spend unlimited amounts in campaigns for or against candidates as long as they operate independently from the candidates. When an individual, group, or party does so, they are making an independent expenditure. These groups use what is known as “dark money” because the source of the money need not be disclosed.

Issue advocacy – Unlimited and undisclosed spending by an individual or group on communications that do not use words like “vote for” or “vote against,” although much of this activity is actually about electing or defeating candidates. (connect to independent expenditures)

Political party – An organization that seeks political power by electing people to office so that its positions and philosophy become public policy

Nonpartisan election – A local or judicial election in which candidates are not selected or endorsed by political parties and party affiliation is not listed on ballots.

Patronage – The dispensing of government jobs to persons who belong to the winning political party.

Federal Election Commission (FEC) -A commission created by the 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act to administer election reform laws. It consists of six commissioners appointed by president and confirmed by the Senate. Its duties include overseeing disclosure of campaign finance information and public funding of presidential elections, and enforcing contribution limits.

Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA or McCain/Feingold) – Largely banned party soft money, restored a long-standing prohibition on corporations and labor unions for using general treasury funds for electoral purposes, and narrowed the definition of issue advocacy.

527 and 501(c) organizations – Interest groups organized under section 527 or 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code may advertise for or against candidates. If their source of funding is corporations or unions, they have some restrictions on broadcast advertising. These organizations were important in recent elections.

gerrymandering -- The apportionment of voters in districts in such a way as to give unfair advantage to one political party.

Caucus – A meeting of local party members to choose party officials or candidates for public office and to decide the platform.

Party convention – A meeting of party delegates to vote on matters of policy and in some cases to select party candidates for public office.

Direct primary – Election in which voters choose party nominees.

Open primary – A primary election allowing voters to select candidates without declaring party affiliation.

Crossover voting – Voting by member of one party for a candidate of another party.

Closed primary – Primary election in which only persons registered in the party holding the primary may vote.

blanket primary -A primary in which all candidates from both parties are included on the same ballot. This is different from single party primaries when Democratic and Republican nominees use separate ballots.

Australian Ballot --An electoral format that presents the names of all the candidates for any given office on the same ballot. Introduced at the turn of the twentieth century, this ballot replaced the partisan ballot and facilitated split ticket voting.

front-loading -States may seek an early date for their primary elections.

Bandwagon effect -- A shift in electoral support to the candidate whom public opinion polls report as the front-runner.

Winner-take-all system – Election system in which the candidate with the most votes wins. Sometimes referred to as plurality rule.

Single-member district -- An electorate that is allowed to elect only one representative from each district-the typical method of representation in the United States.

Proportional representation – A multiple, member district system that allows each political party representation in proportion to its percentage of the vote,

median-voter theorem -- A proposition predicting that when policy options can be arrayed along a single dimension, majority rule will pick the policy most preferred by the voter whose ideal policy is to the left of half of the voters and to the right of exactly half of the voters.

Realigning election – An election during periods of expanded suffrage and change in the economy and society that proves to be a turning point, redefining the agenda of politics and the alignment of voters within parties.

Retrospective voting -- Voting based on the past performance of a candidate,

National party convention – A national meeting of delegates elected in primaries, caucuses, or state conventions who assemble once every four years to nominate candidates for president and vice president, ratify the party platform, elect officers, and adopt rules.

Superdelegate - A superdelegate refers to a special delegate of a party, who gets to cast an individual vote for his/her candidate of choice not based on the votes of citizens. His/her convention vote is not bound by the popular vote. In the U.S., the Democratic National Committee is currently the only political party to appoint superdelegates. The number of superdelegates appointed per state depends upon that state's population and democratic voter registration. (from U.S. Legal glossary)