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Working Paper #81

# State Standards Scratch the Surface of Learning about Political Parties and Ideology

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## Introduction

During presidential races, social studies teachers often use the primaries, debates, conventions, and the general election as teachable moments. Teachers leverage these events to prepare students to engage in contemporary American politics and encourage them to see voting as a civic duty. When teaching about elections, many educators want young people to become “informed voters.” This often implies that a responsible voter should study issues and candidates before casting their ballot. Toward this aim, it is reasonable to imagine a lesson in which students identify their views on issues such as the death penalty, abortion, or gun control in order to determine which candidate most closely aligns with their viewpoints. This “issues first” approach to becoming politically informed certainly has value, but it does not adequately align with what political science research tells us about the behaviors and beliefs of the people who actually turn out to vote. If educators want young people to be informed *and* show up to the polls, then they will need to understand more than their opinions on particular issues. They will need to understand how those issues reflect competing ideological views and the relationship between partisanship and ideology.

Political scientists are finding that, in today’s highly polarized context, those who vote and stay informed tend to be ideological partisans. That is, their views on the issues of the day are either solidly conservative or solidly liberal, and they identify with one of the two major political parties (Abramowitz, 2010; PEW, 2012; Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 2012). In the last 40 years, the two major political parties have “sorted” into ideological camps, with the Republicans advocating for a mostly conservative agenda and the Democrats sponsoring a liberal-leaning agenda. In this polarized context, a potential voter who does not understand that the parties represent competing ideological values about the role of government, civil liberties, and national security will have a difficult time making sense of the issues and campaign rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> Further, evidence shows that adults, for better or worse, rely on partisan messaging for cues to interpret the issues of the day (G. E. McAvoy, 2015). Rather than matching issues to candidates, likely voters rely on their ideological orientations and partisan leanings to make choices. According to these findings, preparing young people to participate in our ideologically polarized climate will require that they understand the ideological underpinnings of the political parties and how their own views map onto the current political landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> We note that there are other demographic trends that increase the likelihood of voting, such as attending some college, being from a higher socioeconomic background, being older, and being white or African American. In this report we focus on the beliefs and behaviors of the voting public, as these are domains that a teacher might be able to affect.

Teachers can play an important role in this preparation. Civic educators must include lessons about political parties and political ideology in their classrooms to adequately equip students to participate in contemporary politics. However, this is not a simple task. Polarization has increased incivility as well as distrust in the public sphere, and therefore teachers may be leery of treading into the waters of partisan ideology. For this reason, we believed it was important to know how the state social studies standards addressed political parties and political ideology. While we understand that standards do not necessarily reflect what is taught in the classroom, they are an important component of the official curriculum.

In this report, we present the findings from our analysis of social studies state standards. The following questions guided our work:

1. To what extent do middle and high school (grades 8-12) history and civics state standards support teaching about political parties?
  - For the states that do include language about political parties, what does an analysis of the standards tell us about what they expect students to learn?
2. To what extent do state middle and high school (grades 8-12) history and civics state standards support teaching about political ideology?
  - For the states that do include language about political ideology, what does an analysis of the standards tell us about what they expect students to learn?

The underlying assumption guiding our analysis is that voters need to be educated about four key areas in order to make informed political decisions at the ballot box. Research in political science suggest that, if we want young people to become politically informed and electorally engaged, they need to understand:

1. The role that political parties play in the political system.
2. How controversial political issues map onto the political spectrum and party interests.
3. The ideological underpinnings of the two major political parties. This would include understanding the range of ideological difference within each party and the ideological positions that are not represented within our two-party system.
4. How one's own beliefs fit within the ideological-partisan landscape.

Our findings summarize how the standards address each of these four criteria. In short, we find:

1. Forty-three states require students to learn about political parties; however, the language in the standards nearly always promotes a simplistic understanding of the *role* that political parties play in a democracy.
2. Only 10 states ask students to study controversial political issues *and their relationship* to political parties.
3. Only eight states ask students to study the ideological underpinnings of the two major political parties.
4. There is very limited support for learning about political ideology. When states do include language about ideology, it is most commonly mentioned in the history standards and very rarely linked to contemporary political parties.
5. Rhode Island is the only state that comes close to requiring that civic education should help students understand where their own views fit within the ideological-partisan landscape.

Table 1

<b>Does the state standard include language related to:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Political Parties</b>	43	7
<b>Political Ideology</b>	8	42
<b>Issues and platforms</b>	10	40
<b>Exploring how students' beliefs fit into ideological/partisan landscape</b>	1	49

See the Appendix for a discussion of our methods and a state-by-state breakdown of these standards.



included mention of parties in the history standards, but not in civics. Again, we found it curious that New Hampshire, which also plays a pivotal role in the primary season, does not require students to learn about contemporary political parties. The language in New Hampshire's high school history standard was typical of others: "Account for the rise and fall of political parties and movements and their impact, (e.g., the Whig Party or the Progressive Movement) (SS:HI:12:1.1)."

When we focused on the 43 states that do include political parties in their civics standards, we found that *38 ask students to address the role or function of political parties in the American political system*. This was by far the most common way political parties were addressed in the standards. Pennsylvania's civics and government standard is typical of the language used to address political parties. Standard 5.3.C.D asks students to "Evaluate the roles of political parties, interest groups, and mass media in politics and public policy." Another representative example is Minnesota's, which asks students to "Evaluate the impact of political parties on elections and public policy formation." *In addition, we found that the labels "Democrat" and "Republican" are almost never mentioned in the standards, though many refer to "the two major parties."* North Carolina is the only state with civics standards that specifically mentions the two major political parties by name.

This emphasis on the *role* of political parties, while an important starting point for understanding politics, is not sufficient to prepare informed future voters in our current political climate. Indeed, we believe a substantive understanding of the role of the two parties cannot be divorced from the ideological positions and values those parties represent.

## **2. Little attention to issues and platforms**

While 43 state standards ask students to identify the role or function of political parties, far fewer ask students to go a step further and identify the parties' stances on major issues. Only 10 states explicitly require studying the political platforms of the major parties. These states are Hawaii, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia. A number of states ask students to evaluate contemporary political issues at some point in the social studies curriculum, but other than the ten listed, most neglect to link issues to party platforms.

An example of a standard that does connect issues to parties is Massachusetts', which asks students to, "USG.5.4 Research the platforms of political parties and candidates for state or local government and explain how citizens in the United States participate in public elections as voters and supporters of candidates for public office." Utah's U.S.

Government and Citizenship standard offers another example. It states, “Standard 4: Students will understand the responsibilities of citizens in the United States. Objective 1: Investigate the responsibilities and obligations of a citizen. e.g., Investigate the major political parties and their ideas.”

One benefit of polarization is that, as mainstream political parties have become more defined by adherence to their ideological camps (i.e. liberals and conservatives), voters now have distinct choices before them (Abromowitz, 2010). For this reason, it is important that young people understand how issues are connected to the partisan landscape. Unfortunately, very few states are asking teachers to help students develop this understanding.

### **3. Political ideology in history standards, less so in civics**

In addition to identifying how political parties align with contemporary issues, it is important for students to understand the competing ideological views dividing the United States. Ideally, this would include a broad understanding of the political spectrum, including the values on the extreme right and left and libertarianism. It is also important that students see how the political parties map onto this terrain and which values are included and excluded in our two-party system.

Of the 43 states that included political parties in their civic or history standards, 17 mention learning about ideology, the political spectrum, or terms like “liberal” and “conservative.” However, for the most part, learning about ideology is separated from learning about today’s party politics and is most often mentioned in the history standards. For example, the history standards in Maryland and Colorado frame the study of liberalism and conservatism as part of a larger investigation into ideologies that underlie historical debates and time periods. The Maryland standard includes the “liberal and conservative debate” as one of the reasons for the increase in political polarization since 1980. In Colorado, liberalism and conservatism are included as ideas “critical to the understanding of American History,” along with “populism, progressivism, isolationism, imperialism, anti-communism, environmentalism, and fundamentalism.” Texas was the only state to specifically mention “the political spectrum” in the history standards by requiring students to “identify significant social and political advocacy organizations, leaders, and issues across the political spectrum (HS US History B).” Notice here that students are not instructed to learn about the political spectrum, per se, but to study organizations across the spectrum—and political parties could be avoided altogether, depending on how one interprets “political advocacy organizations.”

*Only eight states' civics curricula require students to address the ideological foundations of the major political parties.* These states are Arizona, Hawaii, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia. Yet, even when this language is mentioned, it is often vague. For example, we determined that Vermont met the criterion for including language about party ideology, but we recognize that the phrasing of this standard could be interpreted in a number of ways. It reads, "H&SS7-8:14 Students act as citizens by... Analyzing how shared values and beliefs can maintain a subculture (e.g., political parties, religious groups)." Here, a teacher's interpretation of "values and beliefs" might include a philosophical analysis of how each party conceptualizes the values of justice or equality, but it might only include the party's stance on particular issues.

In our view, North Carolina represents one of the strongest and most clearly worded standards related to political ideology as it connects to contemporary American politics. It states:

**CE.C&G.2.8** Analyze America's two-party system in terms of the political and economic views that led to its emergence and the role that political parties play in American politics (e.g., Democrat, Republican, promotion of civic responsibility, Federalists, Anti-Federalists, influence of third parties, precincts, "the political spectrum", straight ticket, canvass planks, platform, etc.).

This standard not only mentions the two major political parties by name, but North Carolina is the only state to use the phrase "political spectrum" in civics. Teachers in North Carolina are prompted not only to teach about the role of the two parties, but the political and economic views (and thus the ideologies) that shape them.

Overall, our findings related to learning about ideology show that state standards give teachers little guidance or support for teaching students about the relationship between political ideology and the current positions of the political parties. This general avoidance of the topic of political ideology misses opportunities for both a basic understanding of these labels as well as a deeper, more specific exploration into how the labels might actually apply to individuals. Defining the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative' is fundamental to developing a basic understanding of modern elections and campaigns.

#### **4. Standards do not encourage students to place their own views within the ideological-partisan landscape**

Informed and engaged voters tend to understand how their beliefs fit within the ideological-partisan landscape. While we believe that state social studies standards

should help students make sense of how their own personal beliefs align or do not align with the major political parties, no state standards require teachers to address this issue. Rhode Island's standard is the closest to asking students to assess their party affiliation. However, the language is vague and leaves room for ample interpretation. It states:

**C&G 4 (9-12)-1** Students demonstrate an understanding of political systems and political processes by... b. interacting with, analyzing, and evaluating political institutions and political parties in an authentic context (using local, national, or international issues/events that are personally meaningful).

We understood “authentic context” and “issues/events that are personally meaningful” to mean that students should evaluate their personal beliefs. However, it does not explicitly ask students to reflect on whether or how those beliefs align with a particular political party or ideological position.

Elsewhere, Hess and McAvoy (2014) have written about the ethics of teachers encouraging students to develop partisan and/or ideological identities. Hess and McAvoy note that while partisanship is commonly viewed as a major problem in American politics, partisans tend to be far more engaged and informed voters—an important aim of civics education—than their non-partisan peers. Our findings indicate that state standards give little support to teachers trying to navigate the ethical terrain that comes with teaching political ideologies. Indeed, the fact that no state standard clearly requires or encourages teachers to help students connect their own political views with the values and stances of the major parties supports our claim that this is a controversial and difficult pedagogical issue for teachers. We know from our own research (Herrera Ward, 2016; Hess & McAvoy, 2015) and experiences as teachers and professional development trainers that there are teachers who engage students in activities designed to help them recognize where they fit (or do not fit) into the contemporary political landscape. How to do this well is a question for future research. For now, we note that no states require teachers to engage students in these kinds of lessons.

## Conclusion

No state met the four criteria that we identified as necessary for informed engagement in electoral politics. North Carolina, Virginia and Vermont are noteworthy, because they include three of the four criteria: role of political parties, platforms, and ideological foundations.

It is important to note that, while our analysis is focused on what state standards in social studies require students to know about political parties, this does not reflect what is actually taught in the classroom. Indeed, our analysis reveals that the standards are often written using vague and coded language. Terms such as, “values,” “beliefs,” and “points of view” can be interpreted in myriad ways. Here, we examined what states recommend that teachers do, and overall we find that if one aim of civics education is to prepare students to be informed voters, then the standards are not supporting teachers to accomplish this goal.

## Implications for Teachers

Our findings indicate that, in general, state standards recognize that young people need to learn about electoral politics, and this includes learning about political parties and issues. At the same time, the standards give teachers little guidance about how deeply to wade into these waters. We conclude with some thoughts about what these findings mean for teachers:

1. Standards are a starting point. They are an articulation of the skills and knowledge that should be taught to students at each grade level. Even though important elements of civic knowledge, such as learning about ideological values, are missing from many state standards teachers may nevertheless find support for exceeding these minimums in district policy and approved curricula. Indeed, our preliminary review of popular textbooks used in high school Government and Civics courses indicate that they often include information on platforms and ideology.
2. Engage in inquiry. Nearly all teachers should feel confident that there is support in the standards for teaching students about the role of political parties. When designing a curriculum around this standard, it is important for teachers to ensure that students understand that the role of political parties is always changing and open for discussion. Students can, and should, be asked to consider controversial questions such as, “Should primaries be open or closed?” or “Should Super Delegates get to vote during the nominating process?” Within this standard there is the opportunity to pose important questions, such as: “Do primaries make the system more or less democratic?” “Do political parties have more or less power today than they did 40 years ago?” “How has the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC (2010)* changed the role and power of political parties?” Engaging students in these types of questions will require them to deepen their understanding of the role of political parties *and* important issues of the day.

3. Teach competing points of view. Our findings show that there is little explicit language that directs educators to teach about political ideology and the beliefs of political parties, but we found that the standards overall support having students “explain various points of view” and “analyze opposing perspectives.” Most state standards also contain language that says social studies education should aim to develop informed and engaged citizens. Helping students to understand the competing ideological values at the root of partisan disagreement is essential for achieving these aims.
4. Teach the relationships. As noted at the opening of this report, political science research suggests that if we want students to become informed voters, they need to have a deep understanding of: political parties, political ideology, political platforms, and how their own views are or are not reflected in the public sphere. Students also need to recognize the relationship among these features of American democracy. Using discussion and inquiry in the classroom to help students make connections between issues, ideology, and party will better prepare students for today’s political context.

## Acknowledgements

This research was funded in part by the generosity of Mary Hopkins Gibb, her husband, and the Gibb Democracy Education Fund. We also thank Diana Hess for her support of this project.

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## Appendix A

### Methods

To conduct this review, we conducted an online search for the most recent state social studies standards for grades eight through twelve for all 50 states. Once we obtained the social studies state standards we used the “find” function to search for any mention of “political party” or “political parties.” After this initial search, we manually read through each state’s social studies standards to determine if the term “political party” was specifically mentioned or alluded to. Our final count includes only those states that specifically use the term “political party/ies” within the civics or history standards.

We also reviewed the state social studies standards for references to political ideologies, the political spectrum or the ideological underpinnings of party platforms. For all 50 states, we first used the “find” function and searched for “ideology/ies”, “political ideology/ies”, and “political spectrum”. Next, we read through each state’s social studies standards in all subareas, including history, world history, civics and government, and geography and economics. Through this process, we compiled a chart that included any standards that either directly mention current political ideologies or may require students to consider political ideologies indirectly through the exploration of a related topic. Collectively, the entire research team reviewed these compiled standards to determine if they directly or indirectly required students to investigate or understand the contemporary political ideological spectrum:

- The standard explicitly includes the language “political ideology” or “political spectrum.”
- The standard asks students to evaluate or analyze differing viewpoints related to political parties.
- The standard mentions “President Reagan and neo-conservatism.” A number of states include this language, and we determined that these standards would require defining “conservatism” in contrast to “liberalism”. Therefore, we concluded that this standard requires students to understand political ideologies.

## Appendix B

State	Political Parties in Standard: History	Political Parties in Standard: Civics	Political Ideologies in Standard
Alabama	+	+	0
Alaska	0	+	+
Arizona	+	+	+
Arkansas	0	+	0
California	0	+	0
Colorado	0	0	+
Connecticut	0	+	+
Delaware	0	+	0
Florida	0	+	0
Georgia	0	+	0
Hawaii	+	+	+
Idaho	0	+	0
Illinois	+	+	0
Indiana	+	+	+
Iowa	0	0	0
Kansas	0	+	0
Kentucky	0	+	0
Louisiana	0	+	0
Maine	0	0	0
Maryland	+	+	+
Massachusetts	+	+	+
Michigan	+	+	+
Minnesota	0	+	+
Mississippi	0	0	0
Missouri	+	+	0
Montana	0	0	0
Nebraska	0	+	0
Nevada	0	+	0
New Hampshire	+	0	0
New Jersey	+	0	+
New Mexico	+	+	0
New York	0	+	+
North Carolina	+	+	+
North Dakota	0	+	0
Ohio	0	+	0
Oklahoma	0	+	0
Oregon	0	+	+
Pennsylvania	+	+	0
Rhode Island	0	+	0
South Carolina	0	+	+
South Dakota	0	0	0
Tennessee	0	+	0
Texas	+	+	+
Utah	+	+	0
Vermont	0	+	+
Virginia	+	+	0
Washington	0	+	0
West Virginia	+	+	0
Wisconsin	0	+	0
Wyoming	0	0	0

## Appendix C

State	Political Parties in Standard: Text	Political Ideologies: Text
Alabama	<p>10th Grade US History: Beginnings to the Industrial Revolution</p> <p>4. Describe the political system of the United States based on the Constitution of the United States. 10. Analyze key ideas of Jacksonian Democracy for their impact on political participation, political parties, and constitutional government</p> <p>12th Grade United States Government</p> <p>7. Describe the process of local, state, and national elections, including the organization, role, and constituency of political parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining campaign funding and spending</li> <li>• Evaluating the impact of reapportionment, redistricting, and voter turnout on elections</li> </ul> <p>10. Evaluate roles political parties play in the functioning of the political system of the United States.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describing the role of third-party candidates in political elections in the United States</li> <li>• Explaining major characteristics of contemporary political parties in the United States, including the role of conventions, party leadership, formal and informal memberships, and regional strongholds</li> <li>• Describing the influence of political parties on individuals and elected officials, including the development of party machines, rise of independent voters, and disillusionment with party systems</li> </ul>	N/A
Alaska	<p>12th grade citizenship 3) exercise political participation by discussing public issues, building consensus, becoming involved in political parties and political campaigns, and voting; B.5. Understand the importance of individuals, public opinion, media, political parties, associations, and groups in forming and carrying out public policy.</p>	<p>8th and 12th Grade Social Studies B.1.3. The origin and impact of ideologies, religions, and institutions upon human societies.</p>
Arizona	<p>Grade 8 Strand 1</p> <p>American History Concept 4: Revolution and New Nation PO 6. Describe how one nation evolved from thirteen colonies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constitutional Convention</li> <li>George Washington's presidency</li> <li>Creation of political parties (e.g., Federalists, Whigs, Democratic-Republicans)</li> </ol> <p>High School Strand 3 Civics/Government</p> <p>Concept 2: Structure of Government</p> <p>PO 5. Analyze the structure, powers, and roles of the legislative branch of the United States government:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role of competing factions and development of political parties</li> </ol> <p>Concept 4 Rights, Responsibilities, and Roles of Citizenship PO 5. Describe the role and influence of political parties, interest groups, and mass media:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political perspectives (e.g., liberalism, conservatism, progressivism, libertarianism)</li> <li>Influence of interest groups, lobbyists, and PAC's on elections, the political process and policy making</li> <li>Influence of the mass media on elections, the political process and policy making</li> </ol>	<p>12th Grade</p> <p>Concept 4 Rights, Responsibilities, and Roles of Citizenship PO 5. Describe the role and influence of political parties, interest groups, and mass media:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political perspectives (e.g., liberalism, conservatism, progressivism, libertarianism)</li> </ol>

<p><b>Arkansas</b></p>	<p>High School Civics: Participation and Deliberation Strand: Participation and Deliberation Content Standard 5: Students will analyze the electoral process and the role of political parties. PD.5.C.1 Critique the roles of political parties in the election process PD.5.C.3 Evaluate various influences on political parties during the electoral process (e.g., interest groups, lobbyists, Political Action Committees [PACs], major events)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>California</b></p>	<p>12.6 Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective offices. 1. Analyze the origin, development, and role of political parties, noting those occasional periods in which there was only one major party or were more than two major parties.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Colorado</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>High School History d. Analyze ideas critical to the understanding of American history. Topics to include but not limited to populism, progressivism, isolationism, imperialism, anti-communism, environmentalism, liberalism, fundamentalism, and conservatism</p>
<p><b>Connecticut</b></p>	<p>High School Civics and Government- Political Parties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the role of political parties and factions in the U.S. political system.</li> <li>• Explain why two political parties dominate in America while other democracies have more.</li> <li>• Describe how political parties both shape and reflect political, economic, and social interests.</li> </ul>	<p>Evaluate the causes, effects, and perceptions of political polarization (issues such as gun control, immigration and immigration reform, health care, equity in educational and economic opportunities, privacy rights, and states' rights v. federalism).</p>
<p><b>Delaware</b></p>	<p>Civics Standard Four: Students will develop and employ the civic skills necessary for effective, participatory citizenship [Participation]. 9-12b: Students will understand the process of working within a political party, a commission engaged in examining public policy, or a citizen's group.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Florida</b></p>	<p>SS.912.C.2.15 Evaluate the origins and roles of political parties, interest groups, media, and individuals in determining and shaping public policy.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Georgia</b></p>	<p>8th grade Government/Civic Understandings SS8CG1 The student will describe the role of citizens under Georgia's constitution. - Explain the role of political parties in government. High School SSCG8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of local, state, and national elections. a. Describe the organization, role, and constituencies of political parties.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Hawaii</b></p>	<p>Grade 9 Modern Hawaiian History SS.9MHH.3.8 Trace the development of the platforms of political parties after World War II to the present Grade 9 Participation in Democracy SS.9PD.5.3 Compare the characteristics of major political parties based upon the philosophy, platform, and support base</p>	<p>Grade 9 Modern Hawaiian History SS.9MHH.3.8 Trace the development of the platforms of political parties after World War II to the present Grade 9 Participation in Democracy SS.9PD.5.3 Compare the characteristics of major political parties</p>

Idaho	9-12.G.4.2.4 Analyze the role of political parties and other political organizations and their impact on the American system of government.	N/A
Illinois	Illinois Standards for New High School Civics Requirement SS.CV.6.9-12. Describe how political parties, the media, and public interest groups both influence and reflect social and political interests. SS.CV.1.6-8.MC. Evaluate the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media.	N/A
Indiana	8th grade U.S. History 8.1.8 Compare and contrast the views of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton and explain how their differences gave rise to the development of political parties. 8.1.16 Identify the key ideas of Jacksonian democracy and explain their influence on political participation, political parties and constitutional government; analyze Jackson's actions as President such as the destruction of the National Bank, the nullification crisis, and Jackson's Indian policy. Standard 3 Civics and Government 8.2.8 Explain ways that citizens can participate in the election process (political parties, campaigns and elections) at the national, state, and local levels. High School United States Government USG.3.15 Summarize the evolution of political parties and their ideologies in the American governmental system and analyze their functions in elections and government at national, state and local levels of the federal system.	USH.9.4 High School U.S. History Explain issues and problems of the past by analyzing the interests and viewpoints of those involved. High School United States Government USG.3.15 Summarize the evolution of political parties and their ideologies in the American governmental system and analyze their functions in elections and government at national, state and local levels of the federal system.
Iowa	N/A	N/A
Kansas	The Role of the Citizen: Civic Values, Politics, and Government The first unit of the U.S. Government course is an excellent place to introduce the basic values of American democracy and bring students into a discussion of how citizens have the opportunity to participate in the governing of the nation. Each citizen makes a choice as to what degree he or she participates in civic life. There are consequences to the choices citizens make—who is elected, what laws are passed, how we define and protect human and civil rights. How do we define civic values, politics, and government? Why are these things relevant to our lives as Americans? Places/Institutions political parties, oligarchy, monarchy, democracy, republic Sample Compelling Questions <input type="checkbox"/> How much freedom do we want? (Standard 1) <input type="checkbox"/> How can I use my knowledge and exercise my rights and responsibilities as a citizen to improve the country and community? (Standard 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Which form of government is the best? (Standard 3) <input type="checkbox"/> How do people come to be governed? (Standard 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Why is government necessary? (Standard 5)	N/A

<p><b>Kentucky</b></p>	<p>High School Government and Civics: Enduring Knowledge: the development and ongoing functions of a political system (e.g., elections, political parties, campaigns, political identity and culture, the role of the media) is necessary for a democratic form of government to be effective. High School Government and Civics Skills and Concept: Students will evaluate the relationship between and among the U.S. government's response to contemporary issues and societal problems (e.g., education, welfare system, health insurance, childcare, crime) and the needs, wants and demands of its citizens (e.g., individuals, political action committees, special interest groups, political parties)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Louisiana</b></p>	<p>C.5.6 Describe key platform positions of the major political parties and evaluate the impact of third parties in election outcomes</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Maine</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Maryland</b></p>	<p>8th Grade Civics 1. Analyze the influence of individuals and groups on shaping public policy C. Examine the roles and functions of political parties in the American system of government 8th Grade History 2. Evaluate the importance of Jacksonian Democracy and how it represented a change in the social, political and economic life of the United States b. Analyze how tariff policy and issues of states' rights influenced the development of political parties and prompted sectional differences 5. Analyze factors affecting the outcome of the Civil War b. Analyze the ideological breakdown that resulted from different events and issues, such as Virginia-Kentucky resolutions, the Hartford Convention, nullification/states' rights, political party division, the Dred Scott decision, John Brown raids High School Government 1. The student will explain roles and analyze strategies individuals or groups may use to initiate change in governmental policy and institutions (1.1.4). Assessment limits: Political parties, interest groups, lobbyists, candidates, citizens, and the impact of the media on elections, elected officials and public opinion. d. Evaluate how the media, political parties, special-interest groups, lobbyists, Political Action Committees (PACs) influence public opinion and government policies f. Describe the roles of political parties in the United States and how they influence elections, elected officials and public opinion High School U.S. History 2. Analyze modern economic, political and social influences on American society from 1981-present (5.6.2).</p>	<p>High School U.S. History Describe the political and social issues that polarized United States political culture after 1980, such as Iran-Contra, conflicts over judicial appointments, the controversial election of 2000, criticism of federal government subsistence programs and conservative v. liberal debates (PS, PNW, E)</p>

<p><b>Massachusetts</b></p>	<p>(HS US History I Revolution Through Reconstruction "The Formation and Framework of American Democracy) USI.19 Explain the rights and the responsibilities of citizenship and describe how a democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process through elections, political parties, and interest groups. (H, C) USI.20 Explain the evolution and function of political parties, including their role in federal, state, and local elections. (H, C) US History II Reconstruction to Present 1877-2001 Industrial America and Its Emerging Role in International Affairs 1870-1920 USII.5 Explain the formation and goals of unions as well as the rise of radical political parties during the Industrial era. (H, E) A. The Knights of Labor B. The American Federation of Labor headed by Samuel Gompers C. The Populist Party D. The Socialist Party headed by Eugene Debs Grade 12 American Government Purposes, Principles and Institutions of Government in the United States of America USG.3.7 Trace the evolution of political parties in the American governmental system, and analyze their functions in elections and government at national and state levels of the federal system. Role of Citizens in the United States USG.5.4 Research the platforms of political parties and candidates for state or local government and explain how citizens in the United States participate in public elections as voters and supporters of candidates for public office federal system.</p>	<p>High School US History II Contemporary America 1980-2001 USII.29 Analyze the presidency of Ronald Reagan A. tax rate cuts B. the revitalization of the conservative movement during Reagan's tenure as President.</p>
<p><b>Michigan</b></p>	<p>F1.2 Using the American Revolution, the creation and adoption of the Constitution, and the Civil War as touchstones, develop an argument/narrative about the changing character of American political society and the roles of key individuals across cultures in prompting/supporting the change by discussing -the development of political parties High School Civics 3.5 Other Actors in the Policy Process Describe the roles of political parties, interest groups, the media, and individuals in determining and shaping public policy through the investigation of such questions as: What roles do political parties, interest groups, the media, and individuals play in the development of public policy? 3.5.1 Explain how political parties, interest groups, the media, and individuals can influence and determine the public agenda. 3.5.2 Describe the origin and the evolution of political parties and their influence. (See Grade 5 SS; USHG 9.1.2)</p>	<p>High School United States History growth of the conservative movement in national politics, including the role of Ronald Reagan • role of evangelical religion in national politics (National Geography Standards 3 and 6; pp.188 and 195) • intensification of partisanship • partisan conflict over the role of government in American life • role of regional differences in national politics (National Geography Standard 6, p. 195)</p>

<p><b>Minnesota</b></p>	<p>High School Citizenship and Government: 8. Public policy is shaped by governmental and non-governmental institutions and political processes. Benchmark: Evaluate the impact of political parties on elections and public policy formation. High School United States History 8. Economic expansion and the conquest of indigenous and Mexican territory spurred the agricultural and industrial growth of the United States; led to increasing regional, economic and ethnic divisions; and inspired multiple reform movements. (Expansion and Reform: 1792—1861) Benchmark: Analyze changes in the United States political system, including the simultaneous expansion and constriction of voting rights and the development of new political parties. (Expansion and Reform: 1792—1861)</p>	<p>High School Citizenship and Government: Evaluate sources of information and various forms of political persuasion for validity, accuracy, ideology, emotional appeals, bias and prejudice.</p>
<p><b>Mississippi</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Missouri</b></p>	<p>8th Grade Principals and Processes of Governance Systems: Describe how to participate in government (i.e., voting, campaigning, lobbying, participating in a political party, petitioning, influencing public opinion, etc.) High School U.S. History and High School Government C. Processes of governmental systems Analyze the roles and influence of political parties and interest groups from Reconstruction to the present.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Montana</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Nebraska</b></p>	<p>High School Civics SS 12.1.1.g Analyze and evaluate the roles that political parties have played in the United States Grades 6-8 Civics SS 8.1.1.f Describe the history of political parties in the United States</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Nevada</b></p>	<p>Content Standard C15.0 - The Political Process - Students describe the roles of political parties, elections, interest groups, media, and public opinion in the democratic process. Grades 6-8 C15 6-8]. 2 Provide examples of how political parties have changed. High School Grades 9-12 C15.[9-12].2 Analyze the role and function of political parties in public policy and the electoral process.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>New Hampshire</b></p>	<p>(9-12) US/NH History HI:1 SS:HI:1: Political Foundations and Development Students will demonstrate an understanding of the major ideas, issues and events pertaining to the history of governance in our state and nation. SS: HI: 12:1.1: Account for the rise and fall of political parties and movements and their impact, e.g., the Whig Party or the Progressive Movement. (Themes: B: Civic Ideals, Practices, and Engagement, I: Patterns of Social and Political Interaction)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p><b>New Jersey</b></p>	<p>8th Grade U.S. History Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s) Explain how political parties were formed and continue to be shaped by differing perspectives regarding the role and power of federal government. High School U.S. History Examine the emergence of early political parties and their views on centralized government and foreign affairs, and compare these positions with those of today's political parties The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945) Compare and contrast the economic ideologies of the two major political parties regarding the role of government during the New Deal and today. U.S. History American in the World 1970-Today Analyze the conflicting ideologies and actions of political parties regarding spending priorities, the role of government in the economy, and social reforms.</p>	<p>U.S. History American in the World 1970-Today Analyze the conflicting ideologies and actions of political parties regarding spending priorities, the role of government in the economy, and social reforms.</p>
<p><b>New Mexico</b></p>	<p>8th Grade U.S. History 3. Describe and explain the actions taken to build one nation from thirteen states, to include: b. creation of political parties (democratic republicans and the federalists); 8th Grade Civics and Government 1. Explain basic law-making processes and how the design of the United States constitution provides numerous opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and to monitor and influence government (e.g., elections, political parties, interest groups) High School Civics and Government Analyze the structure, powers and role of the executive branch of the United States government, to include: specific powers delegated in Article II of the constitution; checks and balances; development of the cabinet and federal bureaucracy; roles and duties of the presidency, including those acquired over time such as "head of state" and "head of a political party;"</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>New York</b></p>	<p>12.G4 POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION: There are numerous avenues for engagement in the political process, from exercising the power of the vote, to affiliating with political parties, to engaging in other forms of civic participation. Citizens leverage both electoral and non-electoral means to participate in the political process. 12.G4d The United States and New York have political party systems, and the political parties represent specific political, economic, and social philosophies. Debate over the role and influence of political parties continues, although they play a significant role in United States elections and politics. The role of political parties and the platforms they represent varies between states in the United States.</p>	<p>11th US History and Government: Varying Political philosophies prompted debates over the role of the federal government in regulating the economy and providing a social safety net.</p>

<p>North Carolina</p>	<p>High School U.S. History Analyze the political issues and conflicts that impacted the United States through Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted (e.g., American Revolution, Constitutional Convention, Bill of Rights, development of political parties, nullification, slavery, states' rights, Civil War). High School Civics and Government CE.C&amp;G.2.8 Analyze America's two-party system in terms of the political and economic views that led to its emergence and the role that political parties play in American politics (e.g., Democrat, Republican, promotion of civic responsibility, Federalists, Anti-Federalists, Influence of third parties, precincts, "the political spectrum", straight ticket, canvass planks, platform, etc.). CE.C&amp;G.3.6 Explain ways laws have been influenced by political parties, constituents, interest groups, lobbyists, the media and public opinion (e.g., extension of suffrage, labor legislation, civil rights legislation, military policy, environmental legislation, business regulation and educational policy).</p>	<p>High School History: AH2.H.5 Understand how tensions between freedom, equality and power have shaped the political, economic and social development of the United States. AH2.H.5.1 Summarize how the philosophical, ideological and/or religious views on freedom and equality contributed to the development of American political and economic systems since Reconstruction (e.g., "separate but equal", Social Darwinism, social gospel, civil service system, suffrage, Harlem Renaissance, the Warren Court, Great Society programs, American Indian Movement, etc.).</p>
<p>North Dakota</p>	<p>2007 Social studies, 8.4.4 Explain the political party process at the local, state, and national level (e.g., the structure and functions of political parties, electoral college, how campaigns are run and who participates in them, the role of the media in the election process, various kinds of elections)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Ohio</p>	<p>High School TOPIC: CIVIC INVOLVEMENT Students can engage societal problems and participate in opportunities to contribute to the common good through governmental and nongovernmental channels. CONTENT STATEMENTS: 2. Political parties, interest groups and the media provide opportunities for civic involvement through various means.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Oklahoma</p>	<p>3. Analyze steps of the political process and its role in the United States' representative government. A. Evaluate the role of political parties, interest groups including organized labor and the media in influencing the public agenda, public opinion, and the actions of government.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Oregon</p>	<p>Civics and Government 8.17. Examine the development activities of political parties and interest groups and their affect on events, issues, and ideas. HS.30. Analyze the roles and activities of political parties, interest groups and mass media and how they affect the beliefs and behaviors of local, state, and national constituencies.</p>	<p>Students learn to assess the merits of competing arguments, and make reasoned decisions that include consideration of the values within alternative policy recommendations. Through discussions, debates, the use of authentic documents, simulations, research, and other occasions for critical thinking and decision-making, students learn to apply value-based reasoning when addressing problems and issues.</p>

<p><b>Pennsylvania</b></p>	<p>Grade 8 Civics and Government 5.3.8.D. Identify leadership positions and the role of political party affiliation at the local, state, and national levels. (Definition listed for Political Party: Any group, however loosely organized, that seeks to elect government officials under a given label.) Grade 9 5.3.9.D. Explain how citizens participate in choosing their leaders through political parties, campaigns, and elections. U.S. History 1850-Present 5.3.U.D. Evaluate the roles of political parties, interest groups, and mass media in politics and public policy. Civics and Government 5.3.C.D. Evaluate the roles of political parties, interest groups, and mass media in politics and public policy. Grade 12 5.3.12.D. Evaluate the roles of political parties, interest groups, and mass media in politics and public policy.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Rhode Island</b></p>	<p>C&amp;G 4 (9-12) –1 Students demonstrate an understanding of political systems and political processes by... b. interacting with, analyzing, and evaluating political institutions and political parties in an authentic context (using local, national, or international issues/events that are personally meaningful)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>South Carolina</b></p>	<p>High School United States Government USG-4.3 Evaluate the role and function of common avenues utilized by citizens in political participation, including political parties, voting, polls, interest groups, and community service. USG-4.4 Analyze the process through which citizens monitor and influence public policy, including political parties, interest groups, the media, lobbying, donations, issue advocacy, and candidate support.</p>	<p>High School U.S. Government USG-4.6 Explain how fundamental values, principles, and rights often conflict within the American political system; why these conflicts arise; and how these conflicts are and can be addressed. High School U.S. History and the Constitution: USHC-8.2 Compare the social and economic policies of presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, including support for civil rights legislation, programs for the elderly and the poor, environmental protection, and the impact of these policies on politics. USHC-8.4 Analyze the causes and consequences of the resurgence of the conservative movement, including social and cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s and Supreme Court decisions on integration and abortion, the economic and social policies of the Reagan administration, and the role of the media.</p>
<p><b>South Dakota</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Tennessee</b></p>	<p>High School Civics and Government GC.25 Analyze the origin, development, and role of political parties. (H, P)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Texas</p>	<p>8th Grade History 5) History. The student understands the challenges confronted by the government and its leaders in the early years of the republic and the Age of Jackson. The student is expected to: (C) explain the origin and development of American political parties; 17) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society. The student is expected to: (A) identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues, past and present; 21) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to: (A) identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important historical and contemporary issues;</p> <p>High School U.S. Government General Requirements Introduction: Students identify the role of government in the U.S. free enterprise system and examine the strategic importance of places to the United States. Students analyze the impact of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media on the American political system, evaluate the importance of voluntary individual participation in a constitutional republic, and analyze the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. 2) History. The student understands the roles played by individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in the U.S. political system, past and present. The student is expected to: (A) give examples of the processes used by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media to affect public policy; and (B) analyze the impact of political changes brought about by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media, past and present. (11) Government. The student understands the role of political parties in the U.S. system of government. The student is expected to: (A) analyze the functions of political parties and their role in the electoral process at local, state, and national levels; (16) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to: (A) examine different points of view of political parties and interest groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Rifle Association (NRA), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on important contemporary issues;</p>	<p>High School U.S. History B) identify significant social and political advocacy organizations, leaders, and issues across the political spectrum</p>
<p>Utah</p>	<p>8th Grade U.S. History Standard 8: Students will examine the expansion of the political system and social rights before the Civil War. Objective 1: Investigate the development of the American political party system. a. Examine the differences between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. b. Trace the development of new political parties throughout the 18th and 19th centuries; e.g., Whigs, Jacksonian Democrats, Republicans. c. Determine the role of third parties as an agent of reform. d. Investigate the role of political parties in the electoral process.</p> <p>High School United States Government and Citizenship Standard 4: Students will understand the responsibilities of citizens in the United States. Objective 1: Investigate the responsibilities and obligations of a citizen. e. Investigate the major political parties and their ideas.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p><b>Vermont</b></p>	<p>7-8th Grade Civics, Government and Society H&amp;SS7-8:14 Students act as citizens by... Giving examples of ways in which political parties, campaigns, and elections provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process. Students examine how different societies address issues of human interdependence by... Analyzing how shared values and beliefs can maintain a subculture (e.g., political parties, religious groups). High School Civics, Government and Society Analyze ways in which political parties, campaigns, and elections encourage and discourage citizens to participate in the political process (e.g., voter registration drives, use of the Internet, negative campaign ads).</p>	<p>High School History and Social Studies: H&amp;SS9-12:17 Students examine how access to various institutions affects justice, reward, and power by... Analyzing points of conflict between different political ideologies (e.g., creation of party platforms). H&amp;SS9-12:19 Students show understanding of the interconnectedness between government and the economy by... Evaluating and debating the ideological underpinnings of government and economic programs (e.g., how much welfare should governments provide, and on what bases do various governments make these decisions?).</p>
<p><b>Virginia</b></p>	<p>High School Civics and Economics CE.5 The student will apply social science skills to understand the political process at the local, state, and national levels of government by a) Describing the functions of political parties; b) comparing and contrasting political parties High School U.S. History VUS.5 The student will apply social science skills to understand the development of the American political system by c) assessing the arguments of Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debates in defense of the principles and issues that led to the development of political parties; United States and Virginia Government GOVT.6 The student will apply social science skills to understand local, state, and national elections by a) describing the nomination and election process, including the organization and evolving role of political parties</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Washington</b></p>	<p>12 grade Civics GLE Political Parties EALR 1 Civics Component 1.2 Grade 12 Scope and Sequence Understands and evaluates how political systems in the United States operate. Examples: – Evaluates the political system examining the role of the chair and the caucus in national and state legislative bodies. – Explains the impact of third party candidates on United States elections. – Evaluates how interest groups use money to promote their agendas and influence the political system. – Evaluates the effectiveness of current campaign finance laws.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>West Virginia</b></p>	<p>High School U.S. History Demonstrate an understanding of the establishment of the United States as a new nation. SS.10.H.CL2.5 trace the emergence of American two party political system (Federalists and Anti-Federalists, election of 1800 etc.) SS.10.G.CL2.6 compare and contrast the position of political parties and leaders on a variety of issues (e.g. economics development, territorial expansion, political participation, individual rights, states' rights, slavery and social reforms) Grade 11 Civics for the Next Generation SS.12.C.19 critique the evolution of the two-party system in the United States, evaluate how society and politics have changed over time and analyze how political parties function today.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p><b>Wisconsin</b></p>	<p>Political Science and Citizenship C.8.6 Explain the role of political parties and interest groups in American politics; C.12.7 Describe how past and present American political parties and interest groups have gained or lost influence on political decision-making and voting behavior</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Wyoming</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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## State Standards Scratch the Surface of Learning about Political Parties and Ideology

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University.

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