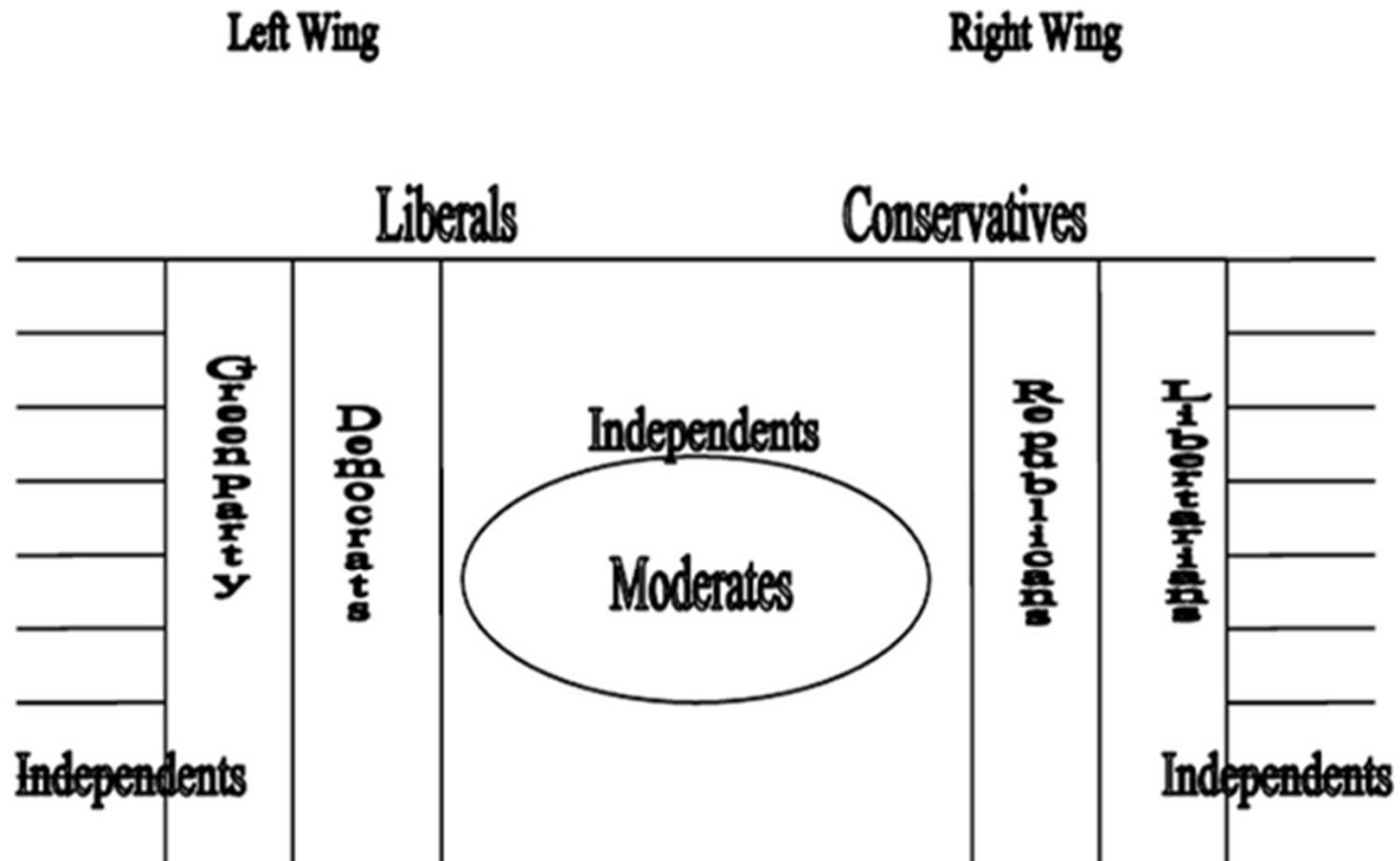


Political Spectrum



1. Based on your knowledge of the ideological spectrum, why would the positions of major candidates be so similar?
2. What is the effect of a third party or independent candidate on an election? Where do these candidates gain the most support?

Functions of Political Parties



“Linkage Institution”

- Anything that provides a link between the branches of government and between the government and the people (the electorate).
- Four main linkage institutions:
 1. **Political parties:** the people have a readymade alternative group capable, ready, and informed enough for the country to move to when they disagree with the government previously elected.
 2. **The mass media**
 3. **Locally elected and accessible, members of government** (at all levels: local, state, and federal)
 4. **Lobby groups:** sets of non governmental bodies who can represent our specific interests during any period of government

1) They recruit and nominate candidates at all levels-national, state, local.

- Parties often provide training for men and women who want to run for a political office.
- Nominations occur through primaries and during national elections, through state conventions.

2) They educate and mobilize voters about campaign issues and the party platform.

- Organize the party at grassroots (local) levels.
- Inform voters about the issues through advertisements (Television, newspapers, online, etc...) and conduct “get-out-the-vote” drives
- The party platform is a statement that lists programs, beliefs, and ideas of the party which voters can review when deciding which party they agree with.

3) They raise money to help candidates win elections.

- Groups, individuals, and organizations may donate money to campaigns.
- Contributions to campaigns have been the subject of much scrutiny. Many laws and regulations imposed on contributions- who, how much, etc...
- Campaigns are expensive and sufficient financial resources are needed to compete!

4) They serve and act as a watchdog over the party in power

- The party that loses the election watches the party in power for any mistakes or abuses of power they make.
- Provides accountability- almost like an informal system of checks and balances.
- The party in power helps to coordinate policy among the branches. Majority Party= control of Congress

McGovern-Fraser Commission created by Democratic Party (1970)

- Democratic Party established the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection
- The Commission was created to investigate and make recommendations for the reform of primary elections within the U.S.
- State legislators had responsibility for selecting delegates to each party's nominating conventions.
- The Commission overhauled the rules, and opened up the process of selecting delegates to public participation and voting, thereby including more women, youth and minority delegates.