

Name: _____ Blue / Silver Period: _____

THE BASICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Task #1: The Functions of American Political Parties

Complete the chart by writing your own definition for each of the functions of the political parties listed and indicating at least one specific example of political parties performing that function currently.

Function	Definition	Example
Nominate candidates		
Inform the public		
Clarify political issues		
Operate the government		
Provide opposition to the government in office		

Task #2: Divided Government

Read the article at the following website. Answer the questions below. Make sure you read the article on the website.

Website: <http://www.politicscymru.com/en/cat3/article37/>

1. What is divided government?
2. Why does divided government occur?
3. How often has divided government occurred since 1969?
4. How, according to the author, do the presidencies of Nixon, Ford, and Clinton illustrate the weaknesses of divided government?
5. Why is divided government “even more problematic in an era of increased partisanship”?
6. How did the passage of Obama's healthcare reform in 2009-2010 illustrate the weakness of united government?
7. In contrast, what was the strength of Reagan's 1986 tax reform and Clinton's 1996 welfare reform?
8. How does divided government improve Congressional oversight of the executive branch?



Task #3: Minute Government: Why have political parties weakened?

Watch the video together and complete the fill-in-the blanks questions below. Afterwards, discuss the answers with your group members. . The group should work together to come up with answers, but each member is responsible for writing down his/her own answers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIXql2644no>

Reason #1: Party Voters

One of the reasons given is that typical party voters contribute to the weakness of the party for the following reasons:

- He joined just by _____.
- He doesn't have any _____ or _____.
- Doesn't have to do anything in _____.
- Really doesn't consider himself a "_____" Democrat. In fact, he actually sometimes tells people he's an _____ when asked.
- He doesn't like _____ by the party. He likes it when the party is sort of in the _____.
- Sometimes he votes for _____ he likes.
- He actually likes it when his representative "_____" the party and votes _____.

Reason #2: Party Candidates

A second reason given for party weakness is the behavior of the candidates in elections, such as the following:

- He knows only the _____ can nominate him and not the _____, so he seeks out voter approval and not party approval.
- He raises his own _____.
- He hires _____, rather than ask the party for campaign help.
- He rarely campaigns by saying, "I'm going to be a good _____." Instead he says, "I'm going to go to Washington and _____."
- He doesn't campaign on _____ so not to alienate possible voters.
- He doesn't get in trouble with the _____ when he votes in Congress against the wishes of leadership.
- He knows that the _____ is better for communication than party.



Task #4: Analyzing Political Cartoons

Look at the three political cartoons and answer the questions below after discussing them with your group. The group should work together to come up with answers, but each member is responsible for writing down his/her own answers.

Political Cartoon	Analysis
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What point is the artist making? 2. Why is neither party willing to do? How do you know? 3. Why is neither side willing to "meet in the middle" in the cartoon? Extrapolate that to the real world?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What point is the artist making? 2. Who does the artist think the Republicans represent? Who does the artist think the Democrats represent? 3. What might be a solution to the lack of representation for the poor?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What point is the artist making? 2. How are the two party's approach to puppies (i.e., birth control) different? 3. What is the artist suggesting about the Democratic (left) point of view? 4. What is the artist suggesting about the Republican (right) point of view?

