

NEVADA PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

- Traditionally Nevada has had very “candidate oriented” elections
- Parties have provided modest support and modest recruiting of candidates
- This appears to be changing – particularly as the parties have entered into an era of very even competitive balance
- A “factoid” that perhaps demonstrates Nevada’s candidate focus – since 1912 Nevada has voted for the winning presidential candidate in every election except 1976

Political Parties

A group of individuals with some ideological agreement who organize to win elections, run government and make public policy

- Group power
- Parties attempt to create broad coalitions (links to proximity voting)
- Are a key to understanding how government is organized

Roles of Parties

- Provide/recruit candidates
- Conduct elections
- Educate the public
- Organize government
- Make public policy

- Provide loyal opposition
- Provide a “cue” for voters

Characteristics of American Political Parties

Two Parties

- Fairly stable coalitions
- Third parties rare win and face structural barriers
- Single member districts, plurality vote winners

Highly Decentralized

- Linked to emphasis on state elections
- Parties have different “meanings” in different states
- “National” party a collection of “state parts”

Semi-public, Open Organizations

- No formal test for entry
- Laws (state) often limit party attempts to discipline members

Loose Coalitions, Fairly Non-ideological

- Party Organizations
- Regulated by state law (NRS 293 mostly)
- Tier system (precinct, county, state)

- Governing bylaws (Dems, in particular, must conform to national party requirements concerning such items as diversity)
- Party success highly dependent on individual involvement and skill
- Linkage between candidate campaigns and party are, at best, sporadic (reflects the point about candidate oriented elections.)

Eras of Party Control in Nevada

- 1864 – 1892: REPUBLICAN
- 1892 – 1908: DOMINANCE OF THE SILVER QUESTION
- 1908 – 1932: CLOSE PARTY BALANCE
- 1932 – 1988: DEMOCRAT DOMINATED
- 1988 – Present: CLOSE PARTY BALANCE

Money

- Trite to say is vital
- Multiple reporting requirements (on candidates and donors)
- Anything over \$100 must be noted by donor name (and all contributions must be reported)
- Groups and individuals generally support candidates who they want in – they don't buy the person, they buy the office for someone with whom they can talk

Direct Democracy

- Nevada allows (in the State Constitution) three forms of “direct democracy”
- This reflects the “Progressive Era” influence on Nevada Politics
- Originally designed to bypass the legislature and entrenched interest groups
- May now be as much a tool of these same entrenched interests (who want to by pass the legislature)

Initiative

Initiatives are a device by which voters enact state or local laws.

Referendums are a device by which voters approve or disapprove of existing state or local laws. They are both methods of involving voters directly in the legislative process of government. Specifically, an *initiative* petition can do one of the following:

1. Propose a new State Statute; or
 2. Amend an existing State Statute; or
 3. Amend the Nevada Constitution; or
 4. Propose a new County or Municipal Ordinance; or
 5. Amend an existing County or Municipal Ordinance
- Text submitted to Secretary of State Office
 - Petitions circulated and must obtain number of signatures equal to 10% of those who voted in the last election. (Doesn't have to be from people who voted in the last election, but must be of eligible voters equal to the 10% number.)
 - Previously required that petitions garner 10% in 13 separate counties (to reduce the clout of Clark and Washoe counties.) This provision was struck down by a federal court in 2004.

- Various rules have tightened requirements on those gathering signatures
- Submitted back to the registrars of voters in each county to be verified (generally done by taking a sample)
- Must be submitted in advance of election (given date) although this is subject to some dispute as to how far in advance
- If initiative is for a statute then it goes to the legislature which can accept it or offer a competing version (both go to ballot)
- If for a constitutional amendment it goes to the ballot where it must pass in two successive elections.
- In case of competing initiatives, the one with the most votes wins

Referendum

- A *referendum* petition can only approve or disapprove a statute, resolution, or ordinance that was enacted by the State Legislature, Board of County Commissioners, or City Council.
- The number of valid signatures required is determined by multiplying the amount that equals 10 percent of the voters who voted in the entire State at the last preceding general election by the population percentage for that county.
- Can be offered by petition (same rules apply as for initiative) or by the legislature

Recall

- Allows voters to remove an elected official before end of term. (Only state and local officials – not federal. Justices of the Peace are also excluded)
- Unlike impeachment – which is linked to malfeasance in office – recall can be for pretty much any reason

- Must file a petition and garner signatures equal to the number of 25% who voted for the office in question in the last election
- Officeholder must be in office for six months (exception is a legislator – 10 days)
- If petition is successful the officeholder has 5 days to resign
- If he/she doesn't resign a recall election is held “within 30 days”
- Others may run, and whoever wins serves out term
- There are protections from multiple recall attempts – primarily that a second recall must pay the costs of the first recall.
- Has never been successful statewide, but has been for local offices, especially in rural counties