

# **ELECTIONS**

Most direct form of linkage between public and gov't decision makers

Occur on a regular cycle (calendar)

Most occur at state and local level

Highly “rule governed” to insure fairness

Election law largely state law within basic parameters of federal rights

# ELEMENTS OF ELECTION LAW

## Who may vote

- Most anyone over 18
- Must be registered
- States may set some rules on registration, but federal law limits what states can do

## What is voted upon

- **Primaries** (select candidates, generally run by party)
- Closed primary (only vote in party of your registration)
- Open Primary (may vote in either party primary, but not both)
- Blanket (vote for either party by office)
- Run-off (few states: when a candidate fails to get 50% of vote, top 2 candidates run again)
- General election (selects office holders)
- Referendum (direct citizen vote on an existing law or law proposed by the legislature)
- Initiative (direct citizen vote on citizen initiated legislation)
- Recall (remove office holder before term by citizen vote)

## Electoral Calendar

- On year (elections held at same time as Presidential)
- Off year (elections held in presidential midterm)
- Odd year (elections held in odd numbered years)

## **Factors Influencing Likelihood of Voting**

Age, income, education

Strong party identification

Group membership

Perceived closeness of the election

Saliency of the election (well known candidates, issues, perceived importance)

## **Turnout Trends**

Decline in turnout since 1950's with occasional spikes

Low compared to other democracies

Americans do get more involved at higher levels of participation, though (run for office, work for campaigns)