

# USA Political System



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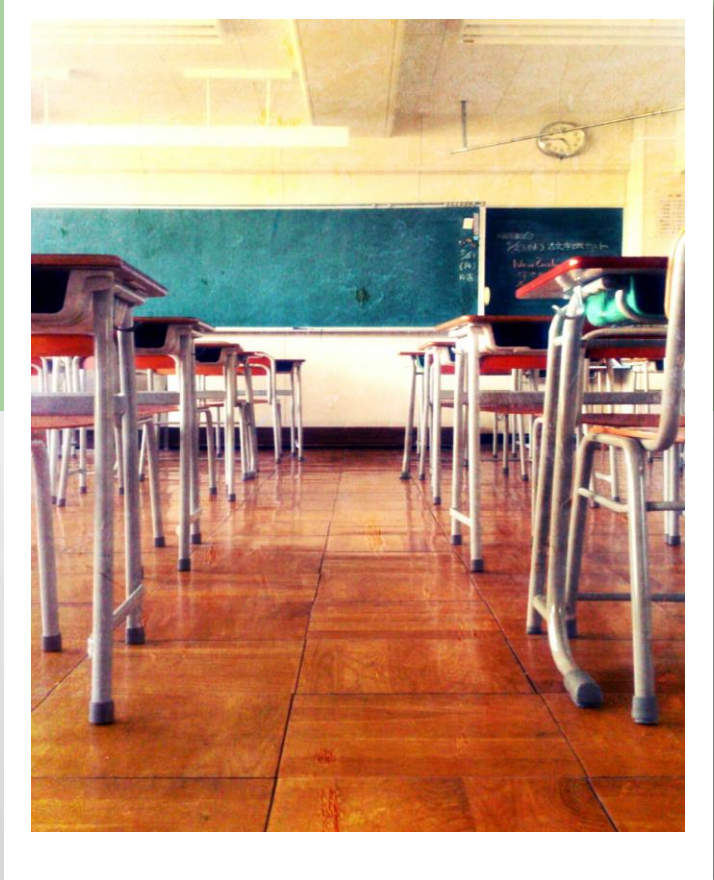




# Part 1

# 01

## Constitution and Bill of Rights



- ❖ **Constitution—basic instrument law, drawn up in 1787, came into effect in 1789**
- ❖ **Two characters:**
  - separation of powers
  - checks and balances

Preamble--- “ We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the blessing of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.’”

## ❖ Bill of Rights

- in 1791, the first 10 amendments were created.
- guarantees freedom of religion, speech and the press, the right of peaceful assembly and petition, the right to keep and bear arms, and freedom against unreasonable search and seizure, among others.



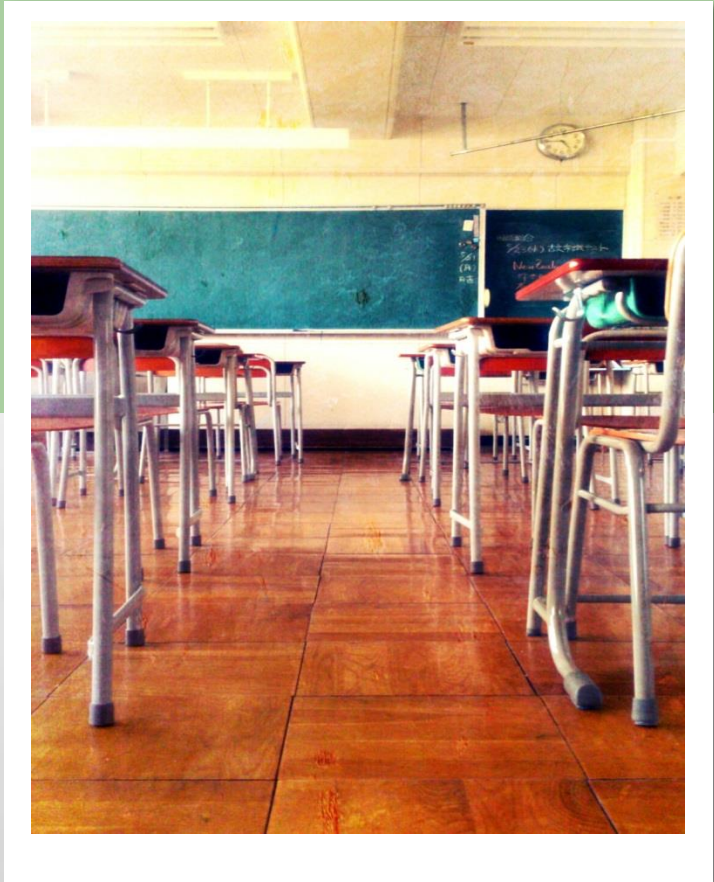


## ❖ Significance of the Constitution

- Taking precedence over all state constitutions and laws, and over laws made by the congress;
- First of its kind in the world, it has inspired dozens of other countries to seek political reform.



## Part 2



# 02

## Federal System & Government

democratic republic with a federal system of government

three equal and separate branches

- the Legislative
- the Executive
- the Judicial

They are checked and balanced by one another.





# The Legislative Branch -- makes laws

## 1. Congress



United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

- Law-making and the supreme legislative body
- Two houses:
  - the Senate
  - the House of Representatives

## 2. The Senate

- ❖ 100 voting members, 2 from each state;
- ❖ can be reelected
- ❖ **six-year terms with no limitation of re-election**
- ❖ **Qualifications for being a senator:**
  - over 30 years old;
  - a US citizen for at least 9 years;
  - resident in the state from which he is elected.

### 3. The House of Representatives

- ❖ 435 voting members
- ❖ Qualifications for being a representative:
  - at least 25 years old;
  - US citizen for no less than 7 years;
  - serve for a term of two years.





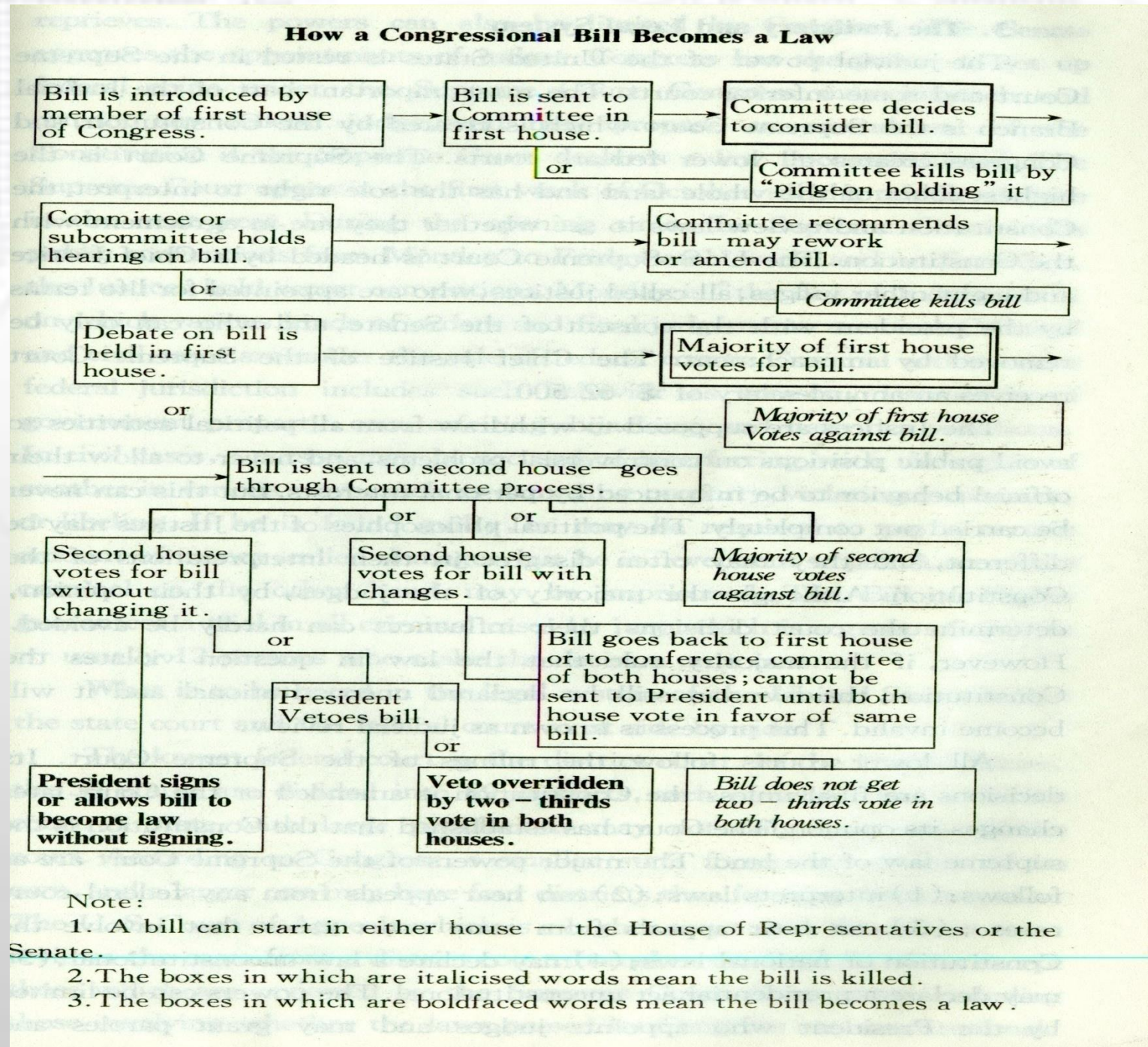
## The Function of Congress

- ❖ **Function of Congress—making/passing laws for the Union;**
- ❖ **Either house may introduce legislation on any subject except the revenue bills which must originate in the House of Representatives.**





## ❖ How a congressional bill becomes a law?



## **The Executive Branch**--carries out laws

- ❖ **consists of 15 departments and many independent agencies;**
- ❖ **Cabinet is formed by department heads—secretaries;**
  - source of advice and assistance to the president
- ❖ **President is chief of the executive.**
  - first citizen
  - his wife—First Lady



## White House

### Official presidential residence

The president works and lives here and the offices of most of his staffs are also located there, such as White House Staff, National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), etc.



The White House at Christmas night

## ❖ Functions of The President

### ❖ As Chief Executive, he is given the authority or duty:

- to command the armed forces and grant pardons;
- to make appointments to certain offices;
- to conclude treaties;
- to send and receive diplomatic and consular officials;
- to inform Congress on the "state of the Union" ;
- to recommend legislation, approve or veto bills passed by Congress, and ensure the execution of laws.

### ❖ The president's limits:

- major appointments with approval of the Senate;
- veto overridden by Congress with two-thirds consent of the Senators;
- all appropriations legislated by Congress;
- can be impeached by Congress if abusing power or committing crimes; no power to dismiss Congress;
- his policy can be vetoed and abolished by the Supreme Court.



## Qualifications of The President

- ❖ **Natural-born American citizen of and over 35 years old;**
- ❖ **Being resident within US for at least 14 years;**
- ❖ **Serve one or two successive terms of four years.**
  - Franklin D. Roosevelt—the only president who served more than two successive terms
  - After World War II, Congress adopted an amendment limiting a president to two successive terms only.

## The Judicial Branch-- interprets laws

### ❖ The judicial branch consists of a series of courts:

- the Supreme Court
- the courts of appeals—12
- the district courts—94

### ❖ The Supreme Court—the highest court

- One Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices;
- appointed by the President with the Senate's approval;
- only removed from office by Congress through a difficult impeachment process.



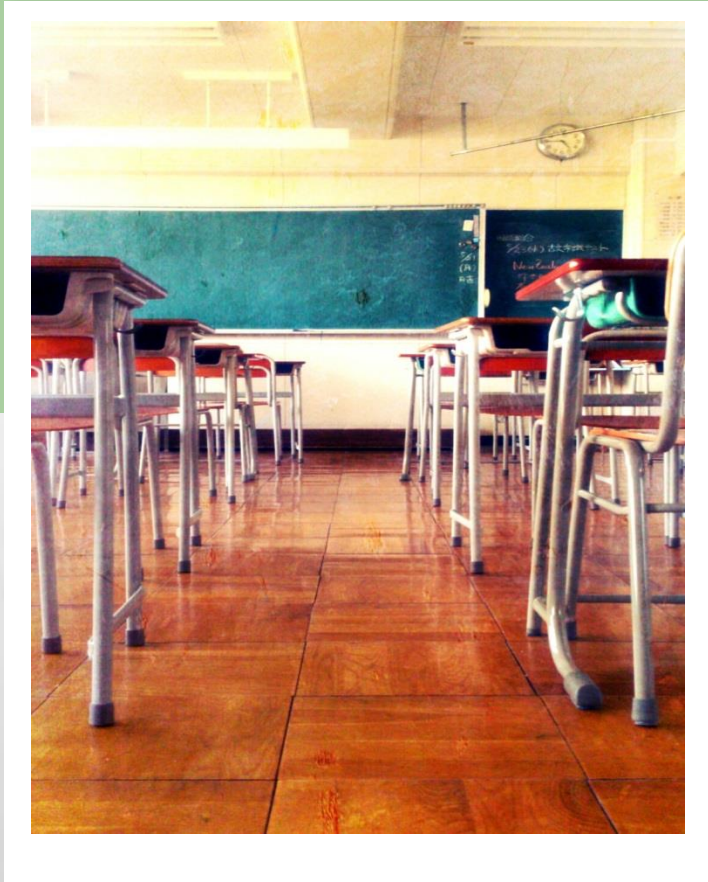
## ❖ The major powers of the Supreme Court

- a) to interpret laws;
- b) hear appeals from any federal court cases;
- c) to hear appeals from state court cases that involve the Constitution or national laws
- d) may declare a law unconstitutional;
- e) may declare a presidential act unconstitutional.



# 03

## Political Parties



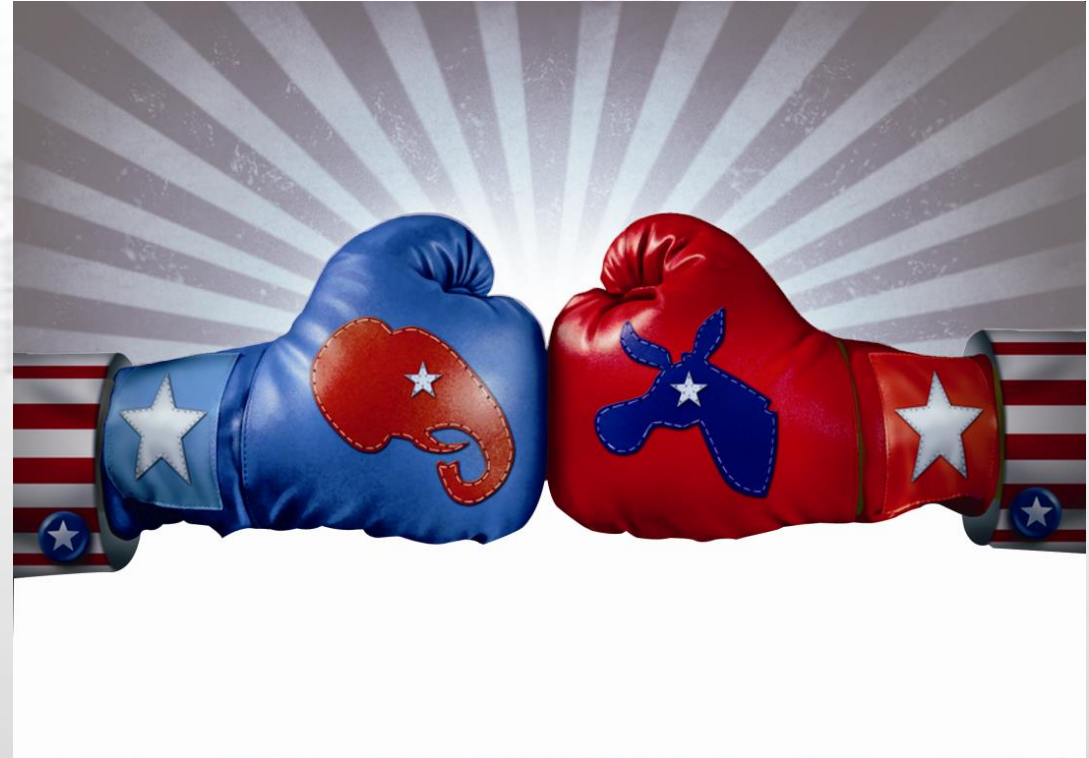
## Symbols of Parties

### The Democratic Party and the Republican Party

#### Donkey & Elephant

Democratic Party--Donkey

Republican Party--Elephant



- ❖ **The Democratic Party—liberalism**
- ❖ **The Republican Party—conservatism**



## Function of Parties

- ❖ **To nominate candidates for office and help them in their election campaigns.**
  - find the most suitable candidates;
  - help candidates to collect the money needed, mobilize the party activists or hire people to help them with the propaganda;
  - urge the public to vote for them and undermine the rivals by exposing their personal flaws or attacking their policies.

# 04

## Presidential Election



**any citizen who is at least 18 years old can vote**

❖ **The Requirements**

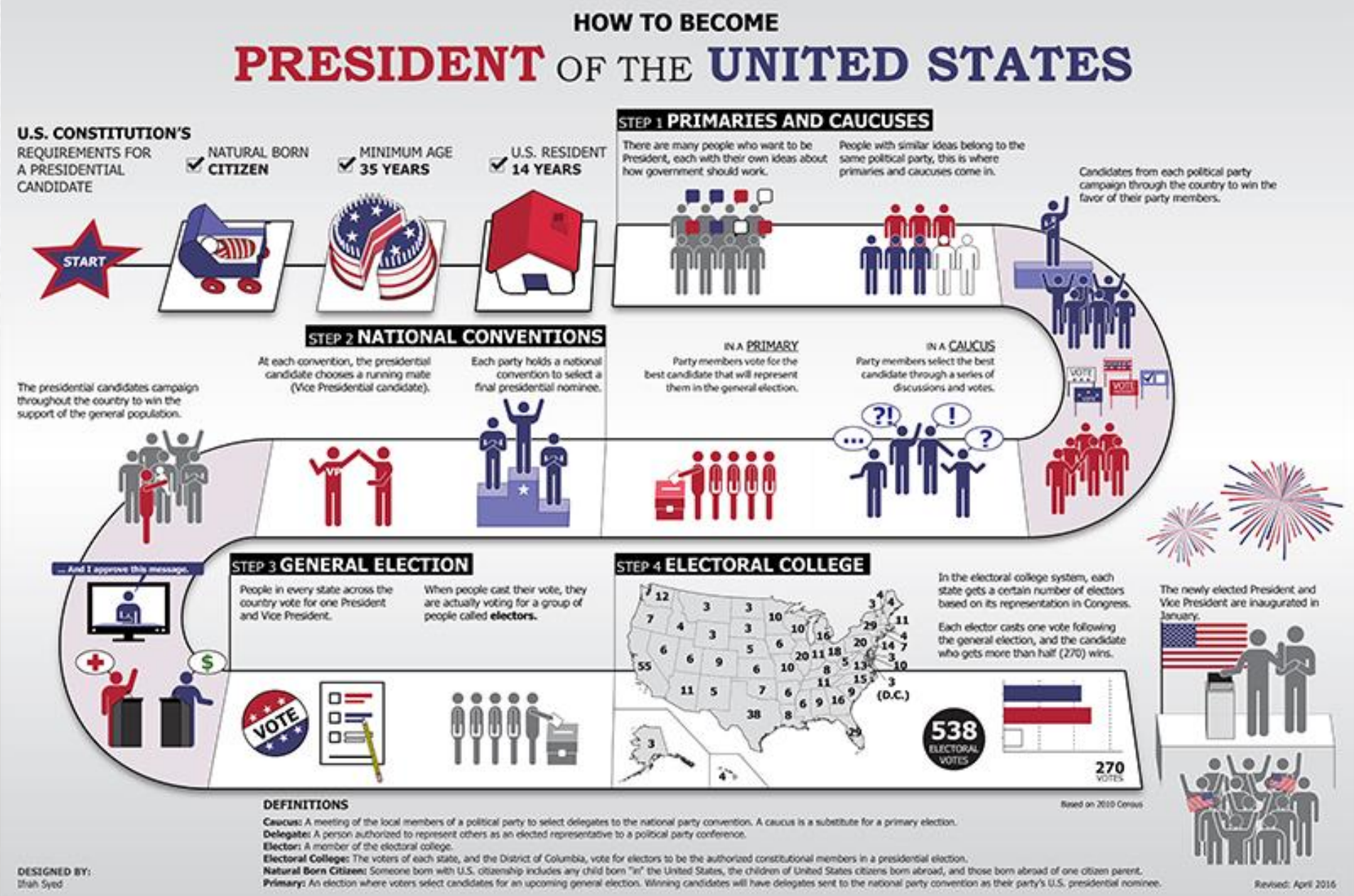
**A natural born citizen (U.S. citizen from birth)**

**At least 35 years old and**

**A U.S. resident (permanently lives in the U.S.) for at least 14 years**



# Presidential Election Process



## Presidential Election Process

### Step 1: Primaries and Caucuses

- caucuses-- vote the party candidate.
- primaries--vote in a state election





## Step 2: National Conventions and General Election

- a national convention--select a Presidential nominee.
- Presidential nominee---announces the choice for Vice President.
- The Presidential candidates campaign throughout the country to win the support of the general population.
- election day--**winner-take-all** rule



## Step 3: The Electoral College 选举人团

- 538 electors
- members of both Chambers were directly elected by state voters.
- A candidate who wins more than half of the electoral votes (270) is elected President.
- The newly elected President was sworn in on January 20 of the following year.

