AMERICAN CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS:
from Party-centered to Candidate-centered

1900 – parties in charge.
- **Nominations:** Parties controlled who was nominated.
- **Political Organization:** Parties monopolized political organization though a system of precinct and block captains held together with the rewards of patronage.
- **Mass Media:** And parties controlled the flow of information to the voter through daily and weekly newspapers with clear party affiliation.
- **Results:** The old system was truly party centered. Parties chose the candidates, determined the issues, disseminated the information, organized and ran the campaigns.
- **Candidate:** To be successful a candidate had to bend his will to that of the party -- typically serving a long apprenticeship, working one's way up in the party apparatus.

2000 -- candidates in charge.
- **Nominations:** We see a party that has lost its power to control who is nominated to primary election voters.
- **Political Organization:** We see a party whose monopoly of political organization has been destroyed by the rise of countless special interest groups and mass media.
- **Mass Media:** We see a party whose control of the media has vanished under a blizzard of competition. We see voters who get most of their information from the electronic mass media in 8-second sound bites on the network news and in 30-second spot commercials during campaigns.
- **Results:** Today parties appear to be at the mercy of candidates rather than candidates being at the mercy of parties. Where the presidency is concerned, a national convention meets and approves a platform. Then like robots, the delegates cast their votes and the winner in the primaries and caucuses becomes the candidate. The party's platform is forgotten. The candidate's views are what counts, and they may change from day to day in response to the perceived needs of the campaign.
- Modern campaigns are candidate centered, and each candidate must rely on her own resources. It is the candidate who assembles organization. It is the candidate who invents a platform. It is the candidate who produces media and buys broadcast time. It is the candidate who raises the money. It is the candidate who hires the experts who have displaced party functionaries in all these areas. It is the candidate who pays the bills.
- Money is the first primary. Regardless of party, the voters are allowed to chose only among the candidates who have been approved by the wealthy. Is it any wonder that the gap between rich and poor continues to grow?
- **Candidate:** To be successful today, a candidate must have the abilities and demeanor of a game-show host, and he or she must either be wealthy or be on very good terms with those who are.

The root causes of this critical shift are technological change and reform politics, particularly the Progressive Movement of the early 20th century.