**Objectives** You may wish to call students’ attention to the objectives in the Section Preview. The objectives are reflected in the main headings of the section.

**Bellringer** Have students suppose that they and a group of friends are trying to decide what to do on Saturday night. Some want to go to a party, but others want to see a movie. Ask them how they would resolve the issue. Explain that in this section, they will learn about how voting serves to resolve public issues.

**Vocabulary Builder** Have students suggest the meaning of each term in the Political Dictionary. **Ballot** may seem like the easiest to define, but tell students that the ballot exists in several forms today, as they will discover as they read the section.

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**Lesson Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching the Main Ideas</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Focus</strong></td>
<td>Tell students that election law has changed over the years to try to eliminate corruption and make voting easier. Ask students to discuss what they know about voting procedures today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Instruct</strong></td>
<td>Ask students whether most election law is federal or State, and why. Continue discussing the administration of elections and then turn to how the ballot and other aspects of elections have changed throughout American history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Close/Reteach</strong></td>
<td>Remind students that most votes in national elections are cast on voting machines. Have students use this fact as the starting point for a paragraph on why voting procedures have changed over the years—and are still changing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Why It Matters**

The election process lies at the very heart of the democratic concept. Indeed, it is impossible to picture a democratic government in which popular elections are not held.

**Political Dictionary**

- absentee voting
- cauclit effect
- precinct
- polling place
- ballot

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**Block Scheduling Strategies**

- Consider these suggestions to manage extended class time:
  - Have small groups of students work to create a voting handbook for new citizens. Handbooks should describe how people can vote, the types of ballots they might encounter, and the voting machine. Handbooks should be clearly organized and easy to follow.

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**The Administration of Elections**

Democratic government cannot succeed unless elections are free, honest, and accurate. Many people see the details of the election process as too complicated, too legalistic, too dry and boring to worry about. Those who do miss the vital part those details play in making democracy work. How something can be done very often shapes what is in fact done—and that fact is as true in politics as it is in other matters. The often lengthy and closely detailed provisions of election law are meant to protect the integrity of the electoral process. And those provisions often have a telling effect on the outcome of elections. You saw how important the details of election law can be when you looked at voter qualifications and voter registration in the last chapter and again just a few pages ago when you considered the complexities of the direct primary.

**Extent of Federal Control**

Nearly all elections in the United States are held to choose the more than 500,000 persons who hold elective office in the more than 87,000 units of government at the State and local levels. It is quite understandable, then, that most election law in the United States is State—not federal—law.

Despite this fact, a body of federal election law does exist. The Constitution gives...
Congress has set the date for holding congressional elections as the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November of every even-numbered year. It has set the same date every fourth year for the presidential election. Thus, the next presidential election will be held on November 4, 2008, and the next (off-year) congressional contests will be decided on November 2, 2010.

Congress has required the use of secret ballots and allowed the use of voting machines in federal elections. It has also acted to protect the right to vote, as you saw in Chapter 6, and it has prohibited various corrupt practices and regulated the financing of campaigns for federal office, as you will see in the pages ahead.

Congress expanded the body of federal election law with the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. That law came in response to the many ballot and voter registration problems that plagued several States in the presidential election in 2000 (see pages 380–381).

In its major provisions, the new law requires the States to

- replace all their lever-operated and punch-card voting devices by 2006—a deadline that, in fact, most States failed to meet;
- upgrade their administration of elections, especially through the better training of local election officials and of those (mostly low-paid workers and volunteers) who work in precinct polling places on election day;
- centralize and computerize their voter registration systems, to facilitate the identification of qualified voters on election day and so minimize fraudulent voting;
- provide for provisional voting, so a person whose eligibility to vote has been challenged can cast a ballot that will be counted if it is later found that he or she, is in fact, qualified to vote.

State law deals with all other matters relating to national elections—and with all of the details of State and local elections, as well.

Election Day

Most States hold their elections to fill State offices on the same date Congress has set for national elections: in November of every even-numbered year. The “Tuesday-after-the-first-Monday” formula prevents election day from falling on (1) Sundays (to maintain the principle of separation of church and state) and (2) the first day of the month, which is often payday and therefore peculiarly subject to campaign pressures.

Some States do fix other dates for some offices, however. Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, and Virginia elect the governor, other executive officers, and State legislators in November of odd-numbered years. In Kentucky, the governor and other executive officers are chosen in odd-numbered years, but legislators are elected in even-numbered years. City, county, and other local election dates vary from State to State. When those elections are not held in November, they generally take place in the spring.

Early Voting

Millions of Americans cast their ballots before election day. Indeed, some 20 million did so in 2004, many of them by absentee voting—a process by which they could vote without actually going to their polling places on election day. Almost everywhere, voters can apply for an absentee ballot some weeks before an election, then mark those ballots and return them to the local election office, usually by mail and before election day.

Absentee voting was originally intended to serve a relatively small group of voters, especially the ill or disabled and those who expected to be away from home on election day. Most States have broadened their laws over recent years, however—to the point where, in most of them, any qualified voter can now cast an absentee ballot.

More than half the States now also provide for another form of early voting. They allow...
Casting the Ballot

A ballot is the device by which a voter registers a choice in an election. It can take a number of different forms. Whatever its form, however, it is clearly an important and sensitive part of the election process.

Each State now provides for a secret ballot. That is, State law requires that ballots be cast in such a manner that others cannot know how a person has voted.

Voting was a public process through much of the nation’s earlier history, however. Paper ballots were used in some colonial elections, but voting was more commonly _viva voce_—by voice. Voters simply stated their choices to an election board. With suffrage limited to the privileged few, many people defended oral voting as the only “manly” way in which to participate. Whatever the merits of that view, the expansion of the electorate brought with it a marked increase in intimidation, vote buying, and other corruptions of the voting process.

Paper ballots were in general use by the mid-1800s. The first ones were unofficial—slips of paper that voters prepared themselves and dropped in the ballot box. Soon candidates and parties began to prepare ballots and hand them to voters to cast, sometimes paying them to do so. Those party ballots were often printed on distinctively colored paper, and

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**Precincts and Polling Places**

A precinct is a voting district. Precincts are the smallest geographic units for the conduct of elections. State law regularly restricts their size, generally to an area with no more than 500 to 1,000 or so qualified voters. A polling place—the place where the voters who live in a precinct actually vote—is located somewhere in or near each precinct.

A precinct election board supervises the polling place and the voting process in each precinct. Typically, the county clerk or county board of elections draws precinct lines, fixes the location of each polling place, and picks the members of the precinct boards.

The precinct board opens and closes the polls at the times set by State law. In most States, the polls are open from 7:00 or 8:00 A.M. to 7:00 or 8:00 P.M. The precinct election board must also see that the ballots and the ballot boxes or voting machines are available. It must make certain that only qualified voters cast ballots in the precinct. Often the board also counts the votes cast in the precinct and then sends the results to the proper place, usually to the county clerk or county board of elections.

Poll watchers, one from each party, are allowed at each polling place. They may challenge any person they believe is not qualified to vote, check to be sure that their own party’s supporters do vote, and monitor the whole process, including the counting of the ballots.

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**Preparing for Standardized Tests**

Have students read the passages under **Precincts and Polling Places** and then answer the question below.

Which of the following would NOT be a polling place?

- A a school
- B a county
- C a church
- D a recreation center

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15 The word comes from the Italian ballotta, “little ball,” and reflects the practice of dropping black or white balls into a box to indicate a choice. The term blackball comes from the same practice.
anyone watching could tell for whom voters were voting.

Political machines—local party organizations capable of mobilizing or “manufacturing” large numbers of votes on behalf of candidates for political office—flourished in many places in the latter 1800s. They fought all attempts to make voting a more dependably fair and honest process. The political corruption of the post-Civil War years brought widespread demand for ballot reforms.

The Australian Ballot

A new voting arrangement was devised in Australia, where it was first used in an election in Victoria in 1856. Its successes there led to its use in other countries. By 1900 nearly all of the States were using it, and it remains the basic form of the ballot in this country today.

The Australian Ballot has four essential features:

1. It is printed at public expense;
2. It lists the names of all candidates in an election;
3. It is given out only at the polls, one to each qualified voter; and
4. It is marked in secret.

Two basic varieties of the Australian ballot have developed over the years. Most States now use the office-group ballot. Only a handful of States use the party-column ballot.

The Office-Group Ballot

The office-group ballot is the original form of the Australian ballot. It is also sometimes called the Massachusetts ballot because of its early (1888) use there. On the office-group ballot, the candidates for an office are grouped together under the title of that office. Because the names of the candidates thus appear as a block, the form is also sometimes called the office-block ballot.

At first, the names of the candidates were listed in alphabetical order. Most States using the form now rotate the names—so that each candidate will have whatever psychological advantage there may be in having his or her name at the top of the list of candidates.

The Mugwumps

The reform effort that brought the Australian ballot to the U.S. was led by a group of elitist Republicans known as Mugwumps. The term has become a common description for party members who object to the party line. The first Mugwumps were a group that split from the Republican Party in 1884 to protest their party’s nomination of James G. Blaine for President. Legend has it that the term derives from a little bird that sits on a fence “with his mug on one side and his wump on the other,” but in fact the term comes from the Algonquin language, in which it means “chief or person of honor.”

Interpreting Diagrams

By highlighting the office, rather than the party, an office-group ballot encourages split-ticket voting. How does a party-column ballot encourage voters to vote along party lines?

To vote for candidates of different parties, voters mark an X in the square next to the chosen candidate or candidates.
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Differentiated Instruction L2

Have students create a time line delineating the types of ballots and voting methods used since the mid-1800s. Allow them to refer to the text discussion on pages 190–194 to complete their work. LPR

Background Note

A Diverse Nation

Another innovation at many polls is the use of the bilingual ballot. The Voting Rights Act was amended in 1975 to require States to make bilingual ballots available in areas where 5 percent of the citizens of voting age are of a single-language minority, and either do not speak English proficiently enough to participate in the electoral process, or suffer low literacy rates. The law required alternative ballots in Spanish and several Asian languages; amended in 1982, 1992, and 2006, it now applies to any minority-language population of 10,000 or more persons.

Background Note

Early Voting

For the 2004 general election, the number of voters who cast their ballots before election day reached a record high. The National Annenberg Election Survey of the University of Pennsylvania reported that 20 percent of voters cast their ballots early. That number represents a 6 percent increase over the 2000 election early voting figure.

The Party-Column Ballot

The party-column ballot is also known as the Indiana ballot, from its early (1889) use in that State. It lists each party's candidates in a column under the party's name. Professional politicians tend to favor the party-column ballot. It encourages straight-ticket voting, especially if the party has a strong candidate at the head of the ticket. Most students of the political process favor the office-group form because it encourages voter judgment and split-ticket voting.

Sample Ballots

Sample ballots, clearly marked as such, are available in most States before an election. In some States they are mailed to all voters, and they appear in most newspapers. They cannot be cast, but they can help voters prepare for an election.

First in Oregon (1907), and now in several States, an official voter's pamphlet is mailed to voters before every election. It lists all candidates and measures that will appear on the ballot. In Oregon, each candidate is allowed space to present his or her qualifications and position on the issues. Supporters and opponents of ballot measures are allowed space to present their arguments as well.

Bedsheet Ballots

The ballot in a typical American election is lengthy, often and aptly called a "bedsheet" ballot. It frequently lists so many offices, candidates, and ballot measures that even the most well-informed voters have a difficult time marking it intelligently.

The long ballot came to American politics in the era of Jacksonian Democracy in the 1830s. Many held the view at the time that the greater the number of elective offices, the more democratic the governmental system. The idea remains widely accepted today.

Automated Voting

Generally, the longest ballots are found at the local level, especially among the nation's 3,000-odd counties. The list of elected offices is likely to include several commissioners, a clerk, a sheriff, one or more judges, a prosecuting attorney, coroner, treasurer, assessor, surveyor, school superintendent, engineer, sanitary engineer, and even the proverbial dogcatcher.

Critics of the bed-sheet ballot reject the notion that the more people you elect, the more democratic you are. Instead, they say, the fewer the offices voters have to fill, the better they can know the candidates and their qualifications. Those critics often point to the factor of "ballot fatigue"—that is, to the drop-off in voting that can run as high as 20 to 30 percent at or near the bottom of the typical (lengthy) ballot.

There seems little, if any, good reason to elect such local officials as clerks, coroners, surveyors, and engineers. Their jobs do not carry basic policy-making responsibilities. Rather, they carry out policies made by others. Many believe that to shorten the ballot and promote good government, the rule should be: Elect those who make public policies; appoint those whose job it is to administer those policies.

Well over half the votes now cast in national elections are cast on some type of voting machine—and, increasingly, on some type of electronic voting device.

Thomas Edison patented the first voting machine—the first mechanical device for the casting and counting of votes—in 1868, and his invention was first used in a public election in Lockport, New York, in 1892. The use of similar but much-improved devices soon spread to polling places across the country.

For the better part of a century, most voting machines were lever-operated, and quite cumbersome. Voters had to pull various levers in order to cast their ballots—one lever to open (unlock) the machine, others to indicate their choices of candidates, and yet another to close (lock) the machine and record their votes.

Those lever-operated machines did speed up the voting process; and they reduced both fraud and counting errors. The machines were quite expensive, however, and they also posed major
Electronic Vote Counting

Electronic data processing (EDP) techniques were first applied to the voting process in the 1960s. California and Oregon led the way and EDP is now a vital part of that process in nearly every State.

For some years, the most widely used adaptations of EDP involved punch-card ballots, counted by computers. But punch-card ballots often produced problems—most frequently because voters failed to make clean punches. Their incomplete perforations left “hanging chads” that made the cards difficult or impossible for computers to read.

Punch-card ballots played a major role in the disputed presidential election vote count in Florida in 2000 (see pages 380–381); and that fiasco led to the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. As we noted on page 189, that law requires the elimination of all punch-card voting devices (and all lever-operated voting machines, as well).

Most States are now turning to two other EDP-based voting systems. One of them involves paper ballots marked by voters and then counted by high-speed optical scanners. The other utilizes a touch-screen. See the illustration on this page for one version of touch-screen voting.

Vote-by-Mail Elections

A number of States conduct some elections by mail. Voters receive a ballot in the mail, make their choices, then mail the ballot back to election officials. The first such election was held in Monterey County, California, in 1977; and the first large-scale use of mail-in ballots took place in San Diego in 1981.

Usually, vote-by-mail elections have been confined to the local level and to voting on city or county measures, not on candidates for local offices. A few States do choose local officials by mail-in ballots, however. In addition, vote-by-mail is an integral part of the absentee voting process, and absentee voting is becoming an increasingly common practice in many places.

In fact, Oregon now holds all of its elections by mail and has done so since 1998. The State held the first-ever all-mail primary election and the first-ever all-mail general election (including the presidential election) in 2000.

Vote-by-mail elections have stirred controversy, of course. Critics fear that the process threatens the principle of the secret ballot. They worry about fraud, especially the possibility that some voters may be subjected to undue pressures when they mark their ballots at home or any place other than within the security of a voting booth.

Supporters, on the other hand, say that vote-by-mail elections can be as fraud-proof as any other method of voting. They also cite this fact:...
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Point-of-Use Resources

Guide to the Essentials Chapter 7, Section 2, p. 44 provides support for students who need additional review of section content. Spanish support is available in the Spanish edition of the Guide on p. 37.

Quiz Unit 2 booklet, p. 23 includes matching and multiple-choice questions to check students’ understanding of Section 2 content.

Presentation Pro CD-ROM Quizzes and multiple-choice questions check students’ understanding of Section 2 content.

Answers to . . .

Section 2 Assessment

1. To allow ill or disabled persons, those who might be away from home on an election day, and those serving in the armed forces to vote.
2. It can ensure that lesser-known people on the ballot with a strong top candidate are elected; conversely, if the top candidate is not strong, it can lessen the chances of other people on the ballot.
3. Polling places are chosen by county clerks or county boards of electors.
4. (a) A ballot is the device by which a voter registers a choice in an election. (b) In the United States, ballots may be Australian, office-group, party-column, sample, or bedsheet.
5. Possible answer: Knowing how others vote might result in peer pressure or harassment.
6. (a) Advantages include higher voter turnout, lower costs, and convenience; disadvantages include possible fraud and, with online voting, computer problems such as viruses or jammed phone lines. (b) Answers will vary.

Online Voting

Online voting—casting ballots via the Internet—has attracted considerable attention (and some support) in the past few years. Will e-voting become widespread—even commonplace, as some predict? Clearly, only time will tell.

Online voting is not an entirely new phenomenon. The first e-vote was cast in November 1997. In that year, election officials in Harris County, Texas, permitted astronaut David Wolf to vote in Houston’s city election by e-mail from the space station Mir.

The first public elections in which some votes were cast by computer were held in 2000. In Arizona, some of the ballots cast in the Democratic Party’s presidential primary in March were cast online. And, for the general election in November, the Defense Department ran a very limited project in which 84 members of the military stationed abroad voted. As noted earlier, however, DOD abandoned plans for a much larger project in 2004. Some 46,000 voters (28 percent of the total turnout) did vote by computer in the Democratic Party’s presidential caucuses in Michigan in February of 2004.

A number of public officials in several States and a number of dot.com companies promote online voting. These supporters claim that it will make participation much more convenient, increase voter turnout, and reduce the costs of conducting elections.

Many skeptics believe that the electronic infrastructure is not ready for e-voting. Some fear digital disaster: jammed phone lines, blocked access, hackers, viruses, denials of service attacks, fraudulent vote counts, and violations of voter secrecy. Critics also point out that because not everyone can afford home computers, online voting could undermine basic American principles of equality.

Answer to . . .

Critical Thinking People might be more likely to vote if they can do so from home.