Political system of the U.S.A - Primary Elections

Definition:

The winner of the primaries of each party becomes its candidate for the general election, i.e. the election of the next President of the United States of America (POTUS). If a candidate receives more than 50% of the vote in the primary, he or she is automatically elected as the party's candidate

Many voters don't seem to realize that the primary election is the most important phase of a presidential election. This is when each vote counts the most, because it gives people the ability to decide who the best candidate is. Unfortunately, many people skip the primary election and only vote in the general election, many of them complaining that their party's candidate is not the one they would have chosen. People who take their vote seriously need to find out when the primary election is held in their state so that they will have a voice in selecting the candidate.

Types of primary elections:

Most U.S. states, in which primary elections are not organized by the administration but by the parties themselves, generally distinguish between two types of primaries:

Closed primary: (internal primaries, party primaries):

- Only party members are allowed to vote. They can only vote for a candidate from their party.

Open primary:

- All voters can take part in an open primary and vote for any candidate, but they have to be registered ..by the party they vote for. The party may require them to express their support of the party's values and pay a small contribution to the costs of the primary.

In some U.S. states, other types can be seen:

Semi-closed:

- Only party members are allowed to vote, but they may as well vote for another party's candidate.

Semi-open:

- A registered voter needn't publicly declare which political party's primary he will vote for. When voters identify themselves to the election officials, they can request a party's specific ballot.

Short History:

The earliest method for nominating candidates was the caucus. The primary system came into general use only in the early 20th century, although direct primaries were used as early as the 1840s. The movement spread so rapidly that by 1917 all but four states had adopted the direct primary. For the presidential contest, however, primaries fell into disfavour and were generally used in fewer than 20 states until the 1970s, after which most states adopted primaries. The differences between open and closed primaries have been widely debated. Open primaries allow participation by independents unwilling to declare a party affiliation. Party organizations prefer closed primaries because they promote party unity and keep those with no allegiance to the party from influencing its choice. Several states have adopted variations, including the mixed primary, which allows independents to vote in either party's primary but requires voters registered with a political party to vote in their own party's primary. As a result of all this disagreement, every state decides the date as well as the type of voting on its own.

Dates of the primary elections for the United States Senate (in 2010):

February 2nd	Illinois
August 17th	Washington
October 2nd	Louisiana