

Name _____

Date _____



Political Parties

Today we're going to talk about political parties...in just a minute.

A political party is a group of people who seek representation in government. They're united by a set of common goals, known as a platform. A platform outlines the party's beliefs and lets us know what their candidates will fight for if elected.

Today, the US has two major political parties: Democrats and Republicans. Democrats are more liberal, meaning they think the government should be active in supporting social and political change. Republicans are more conservative. They believe the government should play a more limited role in people's lives. They also tend to value tradition over change.

But each party has changed significantly over time—and the parties we know today didn't even exist until decades after the US was formed. Though the Founding Fathers didn't want the US to have political parties, the system emerged from disagreements they had on how to run the new country. One faction, led by Alexander Hamilton, believed in a powerful central government. The other, led by Thomas Jefferson, thought this would infringe upon states' rights. This led to the birth of the country's first political parties: Hamilton's Federalist Party and Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party.

How might political parties be useful in government? How might they be harmful?