



American Party Animals: Full Transcript

[01:00:00:00] - START

[01:00:05:00] - Intro Question - "Why are there only two political parties?"

[01:00:08:00] NARRATOR: Here we have America's two-party system. Two parties trading control of government back and forth and back and forth, again and again and again. Why on earth did the founding fathers design it this way? Well... they didn't!

[01:00:23:00] GEORGE WASHINGTON: The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge ... is itself a frightful despotism.

NARRATOR: Nevertheless, almost as soon as there were elections in the US, two dueling parties appeared. Whether intentional or not, the split factions are a by-product of the electoral process laid out in our constitution.

[01:00:42:00] NARRATOR: You see, in American elections, we vote for a single candidate and if that candidate get a plurality, not necessarily a majority, he or she wins. A majority is when a candidate has more than half the votes. A plurality is when one candidate receives more votes than any other candidate. So a candidate doesn't need a majority of the votes, they just need more votes than any other candidate, or a plurality.

[01:01:06:00] NARRATOR: This leads to a two-party system as explained by a principal known as Duverger's Law, which states that elections ruled by plurality within winner-takes-all districts tend to favor a two-party system.

[01:01:18:00] NARRATOR: To explain, think of birds. Now, think of birds who are taking a bird-vote to determine which bird will be in charge of all the birds. There are all kinds of birds of course; but for the sake of our discussion, let's say 40% believe that Cardinals should be in charge. Another 40% of them think the Blue Jays should be in charge.

NARRATOR: But what if you're in a third group, say, Robins. Robins hate Blue Jays because Blue Jays are known to steal Robin eggs and eat them.

ROBIN: Keep your dirty wings off my eggs!

[01:01:50:00] NARRATOR: With only 10% of the vote, this third party, the Robins, isn't going to win this election. So a vote for Robins could be viewed as throwing your vote away. But as a Robin you will do anything to keep those filthy blue winged rats out of office. So you vote for Cardinals as the next best thing. In real life, this happens all the time.

NARRATOR: Third parties, like the Robins, show up on the political scene only to be absorbed by one of the larger parties. And if you're a flamingo? Well, as a ground-dwelling bird, your interests are so marginalized, you'll probably just stay at home, disillusioned and politically detached. Poor little guy.

[01:02:26:00] NARRATOR: So we're left with two major parties. Because sometimes it's less about who you want in office, and more about who you don't want in office. And one easy way to get more votes is by saying negative things about the opposition.

NARRATOR: Nature can be cruel!

GEORGE WASHINGTON: I told you so!

[01:02:44:00] NARRATOR: Then again, some would argue that America's two-party system is partially to thank for our over 200 years of relative political stability. In the end, the two-party system slows down change by cutting down on the diversity of candidates and opinions. The only way for outsiders to really make a difference is to push their views into the platform of the party they are most closely aligned with, and shape the future of our nation.

NARRATOR: Even if they think the two-party system is... for the birds. Sorry, sorry about that.

[01:03:15:00] - OUTRO CARD - *"THINK. SHARE. VOTE. WetheVOTERS.com"*

[01:03:24:00] - END