

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Date of Elections: November 5, 1968

Characteristics of Parliament

The United States Congress consists of two Houses:

— the Senate, composed of 100 members elected for 6 years in a ratio of 2 per state, a third of whom are renewable every 2 years in such a manner that, in each state, both senators are not normally up for re-election at the same time.

— the House of Representatives, with 435 members elected every 2 years, each representing roughly the same number of citizens, provided that each state has at least 1 representative.

On November 5, 1968, elections were held for the entire Lower House at the normal expiry of the 90th Legislature; on the same day, 34 senatorial seats fell vacant upon the regular termination of the holders' mandates and had to be filled in as many states.

Electoral System

The Federal Constitution lays down that all citizens who, "in each state, shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature" are entitled to vote in elections to Congress; it prescribes furthermore that the right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of race, colour or sex, or by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.

Under these terms, therefore, determination of the right to vote falls under the authority of each state. The conditions required to be able to vote vary consequently from state to state:

— The minimum age is 21 years in 46 states; it is 18 years in Georgia and Kentucky, 19 in Alaska and 20 in Hawaii;

— Voters are required to be literate in 12 states where the effect of literacy tests is not to establish discrimination because of race or colour and these do not, therefore, contravene the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — according to a Supreme Court interpretation;

— 12 states require 6 months' residence on state territory; this is increased to 1 year in 35 states and 2 years in Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina;

— in 11 states, "paupers" and persons housed at public expense are not entitled to vote;

— in all states, the right to register is denied to the mentally unsound, defined as such either by specific law or by judicial decision, and to criminals confined to prison.

Moreover, in most states, the electoral rolls are drawn up once and for all and thereafter merely revised periodically, but in 14 states voters are required to re-register at stated intervals (1, 4, 6 or 10 years, or for each election, etc.).

Candidates to the House of Representatives must be at least 25 years of age and citizens of the United States for no less than 7 years.

For a Senate seat, a candidate must be at least 30 years of age and a US citizen for no less than 9 years.

Once elected, a member of Congress must be an inhabitant of the state he represents.

The 435 representatives and 100 senators are elected respectively in 435 and 100 constituencies on a single uninominal majority ballot.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

November 5, 1968, was an important date in American political life. On that day, voters went to the polls to designate the Electoral

College, which is called upon to elect the President of the United States every 4 years, and to renew all the members of the Lower House as well as a third of the senators of the Federal Congress. They were also required to designate the holders of various elective offices — from Governors to county sheriffs — and, in certain states or areas, to make decisions on such specific matters as municipal tax reforms, new issues of state bonds, etc.

Naturally, the presidential campaign, conducted on a vast scale over a period of several months, tended completely to overshadow the others. Generally speaking, whereas issues of local interest, which usually formed the basis of the electoral campaigns of candidates for the House of Representatives or Senate, varied widely from state to state, the themes propounded by the congressional candidates as regards the most important national and international problems coincided with those of their party's candidate in the race for occupancy of the White House.

The National Conventions of the two main political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, held during August in the midst of considerable excitement and even violence, served both to nominate their candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency and to adopt the official party platforms. The Democratic nominees were respectively the then Vice-President Hubert Humphrey and Senator Edmund Muskie, and the Republican nominees Mr. Richard Nixon and Governor Spiro T. Agnew. Mr. George Wallace, presidential nominee of the American Independent Party, waited until October before publishing his party's platform and naming General Curtis LeMay as his running-mate.

In the light of the violent disturbances rocking the country, all 3 parties made a major issue of the maintenance of law and order. The Republican Party strongly advocated measures to alleviate and remove the frustrations that contribute to riots — adding the rider: "We will not tolerate violence" — while the right-wing American Independent platform urged "greater use of police force to maintain domestic order"; even the relatively liberal Democrats published a 7-point list of objectives reflecting their determination to take

strong action to suppress rioting and combat crime. On the home front, national defence, social security, poverty and the racial question likewise commanded much attention.

As regards foreign policy, all three parties — influenced by events in Czechoslovakia a few weeks earlier — adopted a very firm line though, whereas both Democrats and Republicans expressly discounted an attempt by the United States to become the "self-appointed policeman of the world", Mr. Wallace stressed, rather, that all aggression would be opposed "whenever it infringes upon the national interest of this country or its friendly allies".

Needless to say, one of the hottest issues of the entire campaign, and the one on which the presidential candidates and their parties seemed least inclined to commit themselves, was the war in Vietnam. Mr. Humphrey began a statement made on September 30 by saying: "As President, I would stop the bombing... as an acceptable risk for peace", but concluded: "If the Government of North Vietnam were to show bad faith, I would reserve the right to resume the bombing". Mr. Nixon, even less forthcoming, declared that, in order not to influence the negotiations in progress in Paris at the time, he would not indicate what he would do if they were to fail. Mr. Wallace, finally, said that he would base his decision on the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff but added that, if the Paris negotiations had not succeeded by the time the next President took office, the war ought to be brought to a military conclusion.

The Democratic Party had submitted 430 candidatures for the 435 seats to be filled in the House of Representatives and 33 for the 34 senatorial seats; the same figures were 402 and 34 in the case of the Republican Party. Both parties were represented in all 50 states except Vermont, where the Republican candidates for the House of Representatives (1 seat) and the Senate were unopposed, and in Louisiana, where the Democratic seat was uncontested.

A dozen minor parties also submitted candidates for both Houses and, although representing regional rather than national interests, in certain cases put up their own presidential candidates. None of these, however, obtained a seat in Congress.

As a result of the presidential election, Mr. Nixon came away with 31,710,470 votes in the popular ballot, against 30,898,055 for Mr. Humphrey and 9,446,167 for Mr. Wallace, thereby ensuring his designation as President when, on December 15, the Electoral College voted him in by 301 votes to 191 (Humphrey) and 46 (Wallace).

On the other hand, the Republicans failed to win a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Mr. Nixon is consequently the first incoming President since 1892 whose party controls neither House in Congress.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections to the House of Representati*

Political Group	Votes obtained		Number of Seats in House of Representatives	
Democratic Party	33,045,283	49.99	243 (—4)	In Arkansas, w opposed, it i votes of unop are thus not here
Republican Party .	31,850,140	48.17	192	
Conservative Party .	442,129		—	On ballot in 4 votes in New
Liberal Party . . .	271,095		—	On ballot in Ne
American Independ- ent Party	171,422		—	On ballot in 1 California an
National Democratic Party	83,818		—	On ballot in Al
Independent Party .	63,010		—	On ballot in Virginia
Constitution Party .	58,209		—	On ballot in Pe

2. *Results of the Elections to the Senate*

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Seats obtained on Novem- ber 5	Number of Seats in the Senate	
Democratic Party .	24,029,151	49.26	IS	58	(—5)
Republican Party .	23,332,036	46.53	L6	42	(+ 5)
Conservative Party .	1,139,402		—	—	On ballo
Liberal Party . . .	458,936		—	—	On ballo
American Independ- ent Party	177,453		—	—	On ballo polled
Constitution Party .	96,742		—	—	On ballo
			34	100	

3. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to S*

	Senate	House of Repr
Men	99	425
Women		10
	100	435