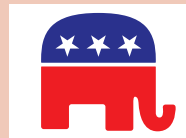


There are two American political parties:

1 The Republican Party or “Grand Old Party” (= the GOP)

Emblem



Colour of the party:
red

Founded in 1854 with **Abraham Lincoln** to oppose the expansion of slavery.

Political platform*

- The Republicans are conservative and defend the traditional values of the white capitalist community. They advocate economic liberalism (= «laissez faire»), and defend the rights of the individuals against the federal government which they distrust.
- Their support is strongest among educated people with high income. Recently, with President Trump, the GOP has appealed to the white, poor, uneducated working-class voters who are easily convinced by populist ideas. The Bible Belt, roughly encompassing the south-east states, is a traditional stronghold of the GOP.

* Platform = programme (set of principal goals which are supported by a political party)

2 The Democratic Party

Emblem



Colour of the party:
blue

Founded by **Thomas Jefferson** in 1792.

Political platform

- Democrats advocate state intervention in economic and social affairs.
- They are often considered to be more sympathetic to the less well-off and more supportive of government programmes to help minorities. Their electoral base is found among low-income groups, racial and religious minority groups. The Rust Belt, the former industrial region covering the Great Lakes area in the North-East of the US, is traditionally pro-Democrat.

Lobbying

- Consists in influencing legislators into voting in favour or against a bill by making financial contributions. Lobbies are also called “*special interest groups*” or “*pressure groups*.”
- Raises the problem of political corruption, but **the 1st Amendment** to the Constitution gives it legal status.
- The most famous American lobby is the NRA (National Rifle Association) which defends **the 2nd Amendment**, according to which *any citizen has the right to carry a gun for self-protection and self-defense*.

Polarisation

- Partisanship (= a strong, blind support to a party) leads to the polarisation of political life, that is to say a complete lack of understanding between the two parties, and by extension, between their respective voters.
- Consequently, the USA is sharply divided into two camps on issues such as gun policies, racial attitudes, climate and immigration.¹
- The contrary of partisanship is “bi-partisanship”: it applies, for example, when a bill is voted into a law thanks to the support of both parties in Congress.

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/12/17/in-a-politically-polarized-era-sharp-divides-in-both-partisan-coalitions/>