

TEXT SUMMARY

To nominate candidates for President and Vice President, each political party holds a **national convention**—a meeting at which party delegates vote. Many States use **presidential primaries**, or party elections, to help decide which delegates will go to the national conventions. The rules about primaries vary by State law. In some State primaries, voters choose convention delegates directly. In others, voters choose from among their party's candidates and the results are used to help select delegates. For the 2000 elections, primaries were held in all but six States. In non-primary States, the parties choose their candidates in local caucuses and State conventions.

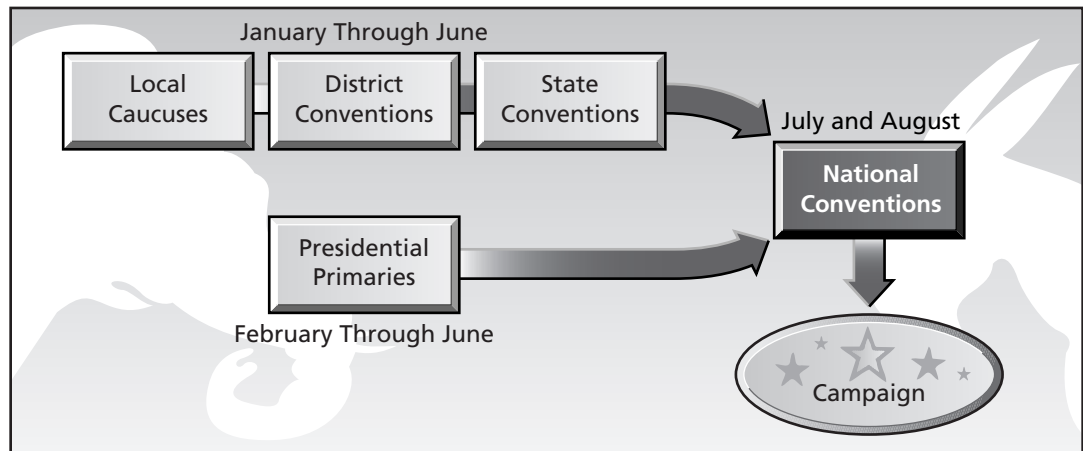
THE BIG IDEA

Every four years, political parties officially select their presidential candidates at national conventions, following State primaries and party caucuses.

A few States allow **winner-take-all** contests. That means that the winner of the primary gains the votes of all State delegates at the convention. The Democratic Party no longer allows such contests. Instead, it uses a complex system of **proportional representation** that gives each candidate that wins at least 15 percent of the primary vote a share of delegate votes.

At the national conventions, each party adopts a **platform**, or statement of its principles and objectives. The party delegates also vote for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. A stirring moment at every convention is the **keynote address**, an opening speech glorifying the party and its leaders.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *Selecting a Candidate for President*



Parties choose their convention delegates by one of these two methods.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the basic purpose of a presidential primary election?
2. **Diagram Skills** At what four events may parties choose delegates to the national conventions?