

TEXT SUMMARY

Four types of minor parties have played a role in American politics. **Ideological parties** are based on certain social, economic, or political ideas. They do not often win elections, but they remain active for a long time.

Single-issue parties focus on one public policy matter. They fade away after the issue has been resolved or people lose interest. Sometimes they are able to get one of the major parties to take on their issue.

Economic protest parties appear during tough financial times. They criticize the economic actions and plans of the major parties.

Most of the important minor parties in American politics have been **splinter**

parties—parties that have broken away from one of the major parties. Usually they have a strong leader who did not win a major party's nomination.

Although most Americans do not support them, minor parties still have an impact on politics and on the major parties. The minor parties' members act as critics and innovators, drawing attention to otherwise neglected or controversial issues.

Strong third-party candidates can also play the "spoiler" role in elections. This means that they pull votes away from one of the major parties, weakening that party's ability to win an election.

THE BIG IDEA

Many minor parties have been active in American politics, and at times they have had important effects on elections and issues.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Four Types of Minor Parties*

<p>Ideological Parties Based on certain social, economic, or political ideas Not powerful but long-lasting</p>	<p>Single-Issue Parties Focus on one public policy matter Fade away once issue has been resolved</p>
<p>Economic Protest Parties Appear during tough financial times Criticize the economic actions and plans of the major parties</p>	<p>Splinter Parties Break away from a major party Usually have a strong leader who lost a major party's nomination</p>

The four types of minor parties form for different reasons.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what ways may minor parties affect politics?
2. **Chart Skills** Which type of minor party is formed by breaking away from a major party?