

## Democrats & Republicans

Elephants and GOP, Democrats and Donkeys (1)  
What does this all mean to me, and why should I care?  
With so many people and so many ideas, we needed a way to simplify all of it  
We came up with the parties (2) to help organize this but what does it mean?  
A Democrat believes that government should help solve problems  
While Republicans think that the market could take care of them (3)  
A Democrat would think that the strong should help the weak  
And the rich should be taxed progressively (4)  
But where Republicans are concerned, a penny saved is a penny earned  
They want to enjoy it untaxed if they could

Democrats want the government to help save the environment  
While Republicans trust business to take good care of it  
Democrats believe that minorities need help to make up for our history  
While the GOP reaction, would be against affirmative action (5)  
It's reverse discrimination and results in higher taxes

Some people run as an independent (6)  
because they don't feel that their cause is on the main parties' agendas  
And that's the great part of our country, an equal voice for everybody (7)

A Democrat wants the government to help fund education  
While Republicans believe that schools could grow from competition  
Republicans think there's much too much red tape  
governing workers and businesses today  
But a Democrat thinks there's need to control business greed (8)  
And they'll use the government to help those in need

Elephants and GOP, Democrats and Donkeys  
What does this all mean to me, and why should I care?  
Right wing left wing (9) liberal conservative (10)  
How do you know which group that you most agree with?  
Both parties want you to see their side  
So which party will you vote for this time? (11)

## NOTES

- 1) **Elephants and Donkeys**: GOP (Grand Old Party) is the nickname for the Republican party. The elephant symbol for Republicans and the donkey for Democrats were popularized by political cartoonist Thomas Nast in the 1870's.
- 2) **Came Up With the Parties**: Although political parties have been a part of American political life from the start, they are not mentioned in the Constitution. Parties emerged early in the republic when George Washington's Federalist Party competed for power with the Democratic-Republican party of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Since then, the United States has been, overwhelmingly, a two-party system.
- 3) **Government and the Market**: Democrats and Republicans differ in their attitude toward the role of government in society. Generally, Democrats support a more active government and Republicans favor a limited role for government.
- 4) **Progressive Taxation**: Progressive taxation means that those who make more money have a higher percentage of their incomes taxed.
- 5) **Affirmative Action**: Affirmative action is a government program or legal requirement designed to provide advantages to racial or ethnic minorities to redress past discrimination. For example, affirmative action might mean setting aside a percentage of a college's incoming freshman class for African-American students.
- 6) **Independents**: An independent is a person who runs without any party affiliation, neither Democrat nor Republican. Besides running as an independent, candidates who do not agree with the ideas of the two main parties may form a "third party." These are smaller groups, such as the Green Party, Libertarian Party, and others. Historically, third parties have played significant roles in several Presidential elections (Populist [1896], Progressive [1912], Green [2000]).
- 7) **Equal Voice**: Those who support a greater number and variety of political parties tend to criticize the system of campaign finance, through which parties fund the increasingly expensive election campaigns of candidates. The rules and procedures, they argue, preserves two-party domination of political life in the U.S.
- 8) **Greed**: Most Democrats are in favor of free competition and a system that encourages business growth and personal wealth, but also assume that the drive for profit can be harmful to society if not regulated by government.

9) **Right Wing, Left Wing**: “Right” and “Left” are references to the political spectrum, a way to visualize different political views and the parties which support those views. In the U.S., both the Democratic and Republican parties are generally regarded as being oriented toward the center of the arc that represents the political spectrum. The Democratic Party would be placed toward the left of the GOP because of its greater receptivity to using government to address society’s problems.

10) **Liberal and Conservative**: These terms refer to different political views in a general way. The Democratic and Republican parties are specific political parties which tend to support liberal and conservative positions, respectively.

11) **Vote This Time**: Everyone can begin to develop a political identity as soon as they become interested and are able to understand the issues.

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