

# **The U.S. Election System and the Campaign of 2012**

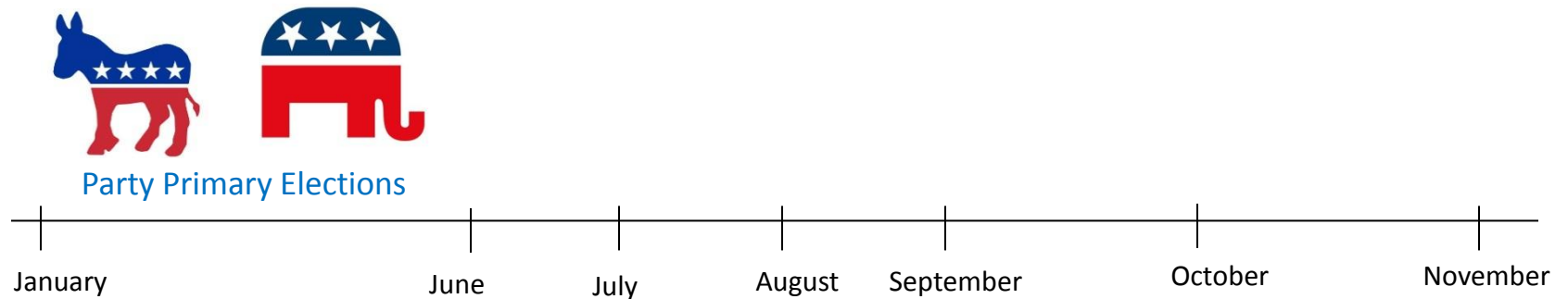
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# The talk

- Timeline of a U.S. presidential election year
- The 3 **P**s of Presidential elections and what they mean for 2012
- Conclusion

# Timeline of a U.S. Presidential Election Year



# Party Primaries

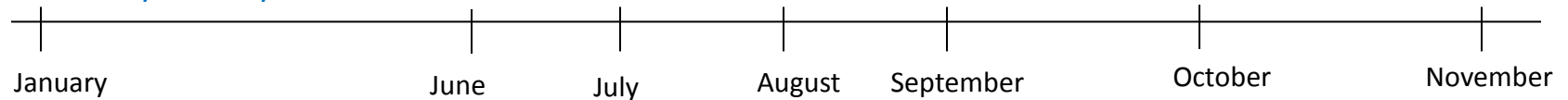
- Candidates compete with fellow party members in a series of state-by-state elections
- Voters select their party's presidential nominee
  - Republican Mitt Romney defeated 11 other candidates
  - Democrat Barack Obama faced no competition

# Timeline of a U.S. Presidential Election Year



Party Primary Elections

Party Conventions

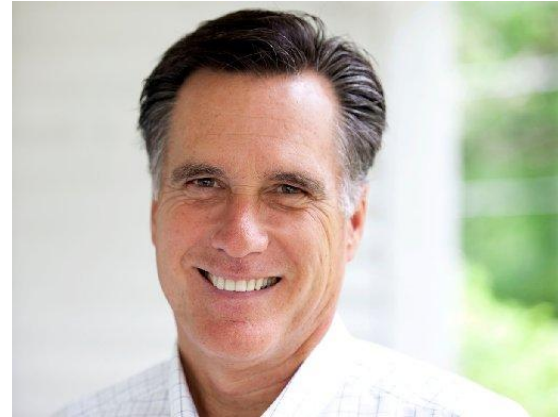


# Party Conventions

- In August and September, each party holds its convention
  - Formally nominate presidential and vice presidential candidates
  - Generate enthusiasm among supporters
- Mark the official start of the general election
  - In reality, the campaign begins months earlier

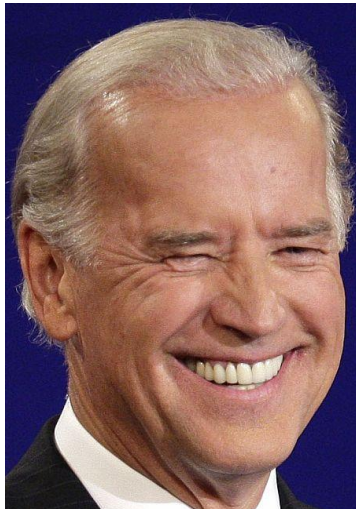


Barack Obama, Democratic Party  
Presidential Candidate



Mitt Romney, Republican Party  
Presidential Candidate

VS.

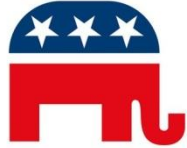


Joe Biden, Democratic Party  
Vice Presidential Candidate



Paul Ryan, Republican Party  
Vice Presidential Candidate

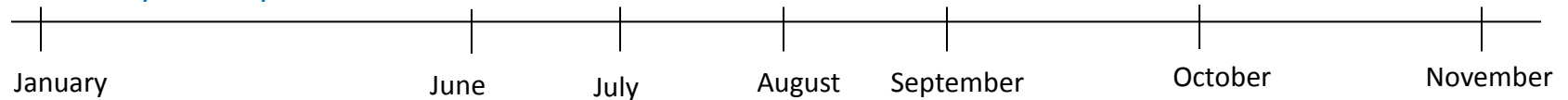
# Timeline of a U.S. Presidential Election Year



Party Primary Elections

Party Conventions

General Election





# General election

- Candidates travel the country, run television ads, and participate in 3 debates
- Two goals
  - Mobilize their supporters to turn out and vote
  - Win over undecided, independent voters

# Timeline of a U.S. Presidential Election Year

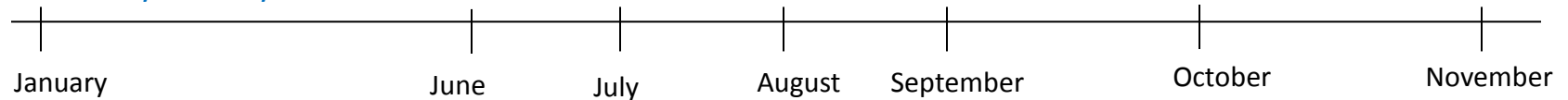


Party Primary Elections

Party Conventions

General Election

Election Day



# How the Electoral College Works

- States hold individual elections
- The popular winner in each state is awarded the state's "electoral votes"
- Each state is worth a different number of electoral votes, based on its population. (Texas is worth 38. Wyoming is worth 3.) There are 538 in all



## ELECTORAL COLLEGE MAP



# How the Electoral College Works

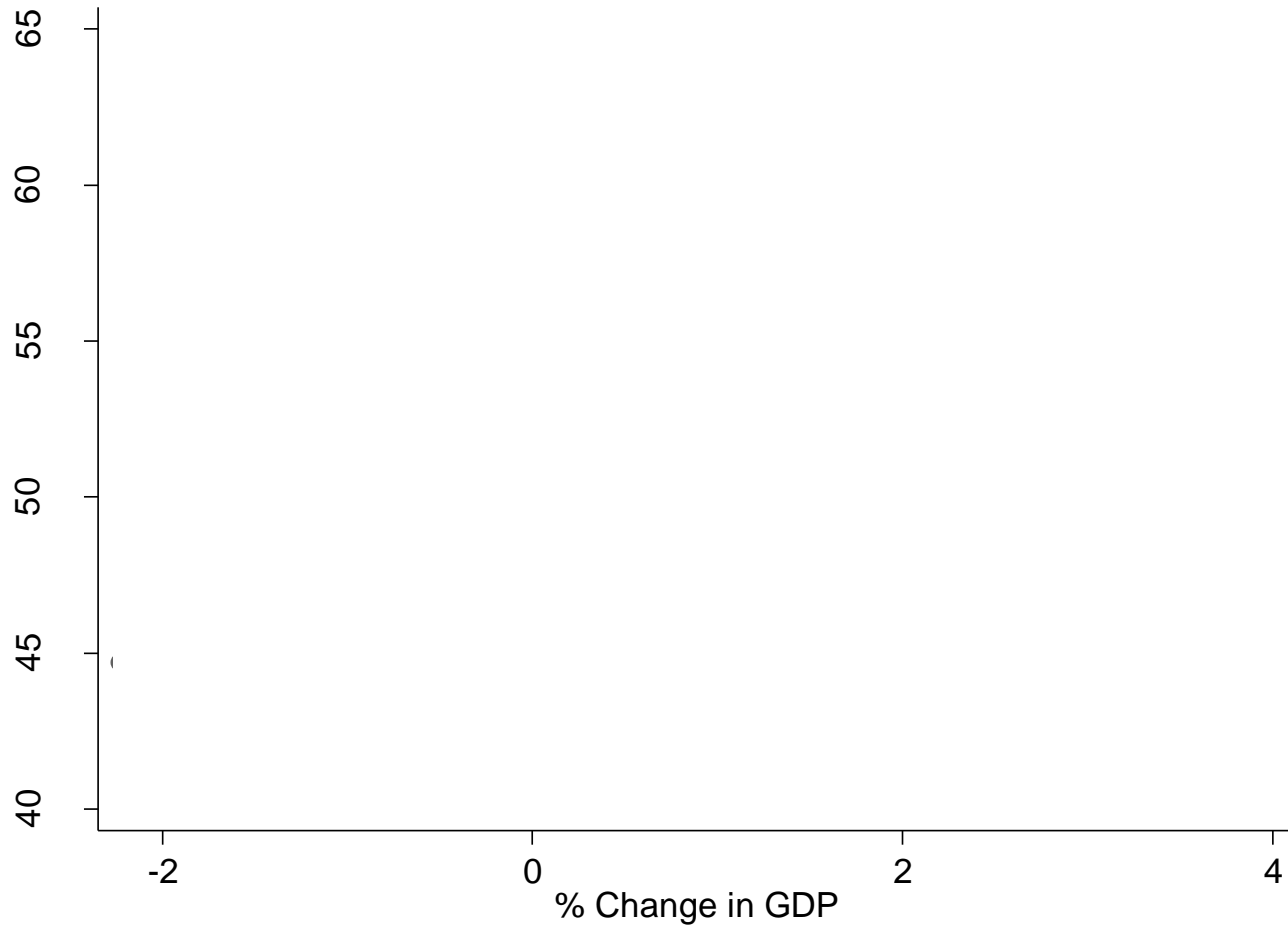
- States hold individual elections
- The popular winner in each state is awarded the state's "electoral votes"
- Each state is worth a different number of electoral votes, based on its population. (Texas is worth 38. Wyoming is worth 3.) There are 538 in all
- To become president, a candidate must win enough states to gain at least 270 electoral votes

# The 3 **P**s of U.S. Presidential Elections

- **P**rosperity

# Key Issues in the 2012 Campaign

1. The economy
2. The economy
3. The economy



When the economy is moderate or good, the incumbent party wins

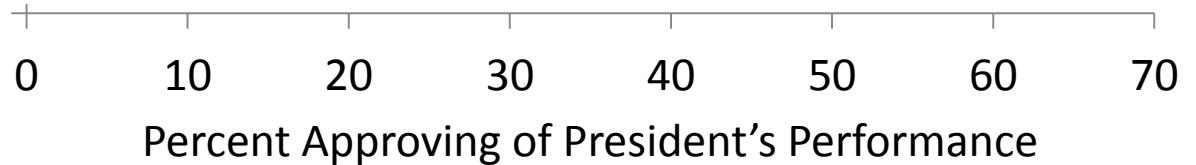
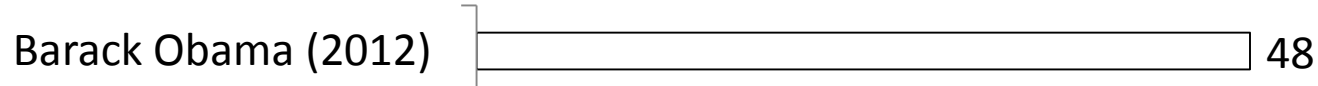


# The 3 P of Presidential Elections

- Prosperity
- Presidential approval

# Presidential Approval in Summer before Re-election Campaign

(Gallup Polls, 1972-2012)



**Green = Won | Red = Lost**

# The 3 P's of Presidential Elections

- Prosperity
- Presidential approval
- Polarization

## **OBAMA JOB APPROVAL**

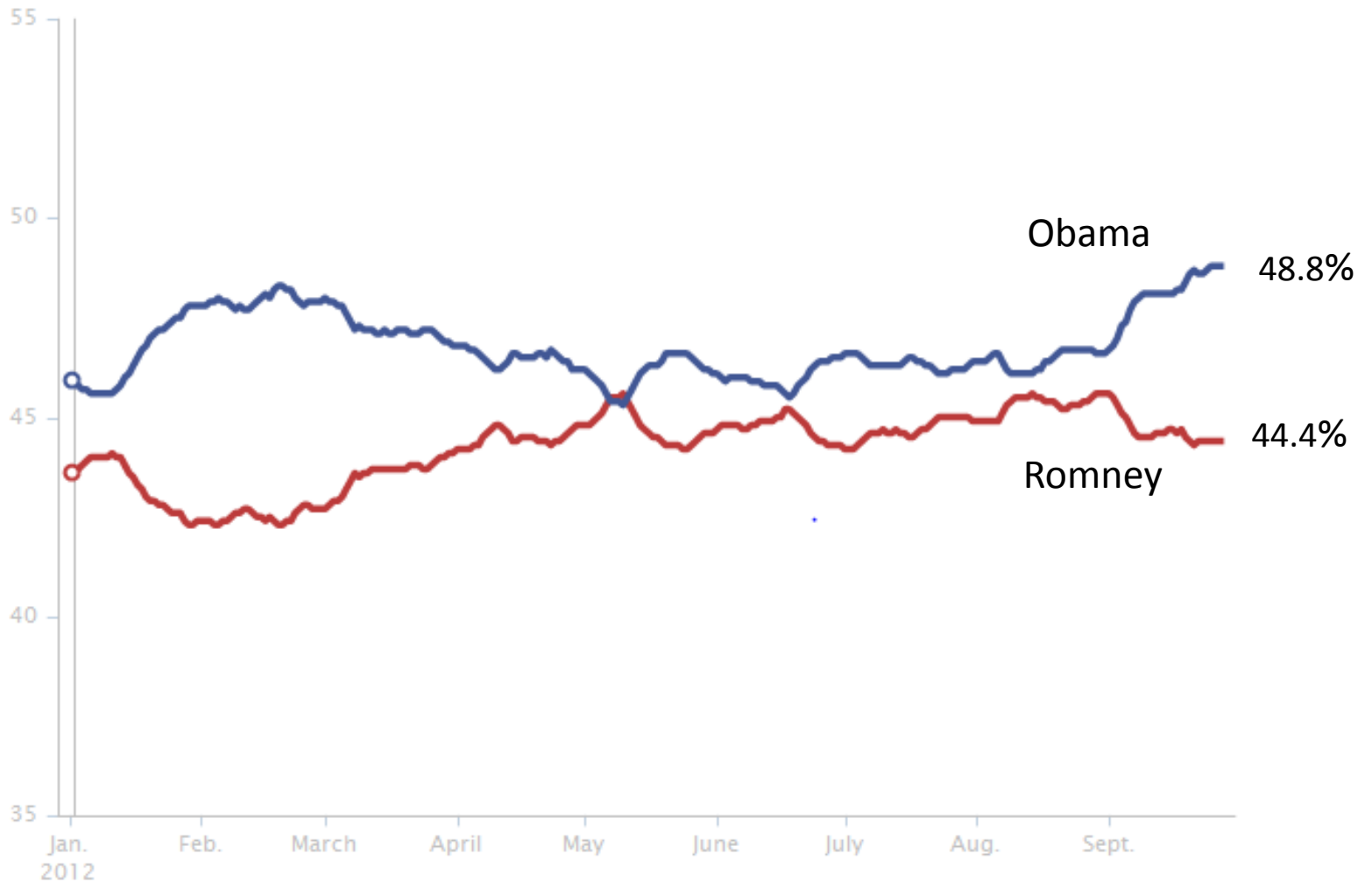
All Americans

48%

Gallup Weekly Tracking Poll, Sept 17-23

# Where the race stands today

(HuffPost Pollster Polling Average, January – September 2012)



# Conclusion

- To become president, a candidate must win both his party's primary and the general election, an unusually lengthy process
- U.S. presidential elections are strongly influenced by economic conditions, presidential approval, and the candidates' efforts to mobilize their supporters
- Obama has some advantages, but the 2012 election will be close

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