Momentum Bounce: The perceived positive impact on a campaign, measured by polls, after a convention but results can be exaggerated majorly, as in 2012 Romney’s speech flopped (and failed to get a bounce – even the Gallup Poll suggested that Romney had dipped 1% point; Romney’s convention was a disaster)

Importance of NNCs:

- Very few voters make their voting decision based upon what happens at the NNC, with over 70% making their minds up before the NNC occurs (Washington ABC-Poll)
- Conventions deliver scripted, devoid of debate and political content speeches; in the modern age celebrity endorsements now score higher viewing figures than high profile politicians themselves
- Television coverage of the NNCs has declined greatly – only 12 hours for the 2008 (on CBS, NBC and ABC) only full coverage was available on cable TV; this puts the NNCs into less homes across the USA but also represents a decline in the importance of the Conventions themselves
- BUT – The conventions are vital for the reunification of the party after Primary season
- They allow for celebration of past successes; and motivating the faithful + voters
  - The purpose has changed, and importance has declined, but are still relatively important
  - “The conventions may have become less newsworthy, but they are still important” Wayne

Campaign Finance:

- Much of the Financial reforms were triggered after Watergate Scandal 1972
- **Federal Election Campaign Act 1974** – Limited Individual contributions to a candidate to $1000, Limited Corporate contributions to $5000. Prohibited donations from non-USA citizens, Limited expenditure to $10m in the Primaries, and $20m in the General Election, the figures index linked to inflation. Provided ‘matching funds’ from Federal Taxpayers on a dollar for dollar basis for contributions up to $250 and established the Federal Election Committee (FEC) to enforce the new system
- **FECA1974** was weakened by both the Supreme Court and Congress; Buckley v. Valeo 1976 ruled that limitations on what individuals or PACs could contribute infringed the 1st Amendment + Congress in 1979 allowed parties to raise money for aspects such as voter registration, ‘party building’ activities and get-out-the-vote drives – now known as Soft Money
- **2002 McCain-Feingold Act (Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act 2002)** The basis for McCain’s presidential nomination drive, eventually passed in 2002 thanks to John McCain (R-Arizona) and Russell Feingold (D-Wisconsin) – The Act; National Party Committees banned from raising or spending soft money, Labour Unions and corporations forbidden from funding issue adverts directly, Use of Unions and corporate money to broadcast advertisements that mention a federal candidate within 60 days of a general election or 30 days of a primary were banned, Fundraising on Federal property was forbidden, Increased individual limits on contributions to individual candidates or candidate committees to $2,300 (2007-08) to be flexible with inflation with each odd numbered year, Introduced ‘Stand By Your Ad’ provision resulting in all campaign ads ending with a personal endorsement from the candidate
Congressional Elections

Timing of Congressional Elections:

- Occur every 2 years for Members of the House of Representatives
- Occur every 6 years for Senators – 1/3 Senators up for election every 2 years
- Per Electoral Cycle; The Whole House and 1/3 of the Senate are up for Elections
- Elections held for the House + 1/3 Senate held in years in between POTUS elections
- In all US elections, incumbents will have a higher re-election rate
- 2008; only 4 representatives were defeated by newcomers in the Primaries

Trends in Congressional Elections:

- **Coattails Effect**
  - Occurs when a strong top candidate at the top of the ticket has a knock on effect in getting other candidates from the same party elected but in lower positions (occurs when several elections are held on one ballot)
  - In this sense, other candidates ride in on the coat-tails of the best candidate
  - 1980 Reagan; also swept in 33 new House representatives + 12 new senators
  - Recent elections have witnessed a reverse coat-tails effect; 1992 Clinton; lost 9 House seats + 0 losses in the Senate – 2000 Bush; lost 4 senators → 2008 No evidence of Coattails effect since many congressional runners had greater approval rating than Obama
  - Big Numbers of Congress Representatives allow Stuff to get done; Obama supermajority
  - “Members of Congress who believe that they were elected with the help of the president are more likely to co-operate with him” Jacobson

- **Split-Ticket Voting**
  - The practice of voting for candidates of two or more parties for different offices at the same election (The converse is the Straight-Ticket Voting)
  - Possible to vote for Republican Congressman but Democrat President
  - 2012; Paul Ryan not elected VP but elected Congressman again – on the same ballot
  - There is evidence to suggest voters want a divided Government; 1996 Republicans knew that Dole would lose; to they urged voters to elect a Republican Congress – which they did

- **Strong Support for Incumbent**
  - Exceptionally high re-election rates for those already in office especially Congress

- **Fewer Competitive Races in House Elections**
  - 2006, 2008 produced the highest number of competitive elections

Voting Behaviour in Congressional Elections:

- Voters take Congressional records into account greatly (Folks Back Home Theory)
- Senator Huddleston – Missed ¼ of roll calls and so was defeated (1984)
- Senator Dixon was defeated after his vote confirmed Clarence Thomas as Justice (1991)