



Elections and Politics

Instructional Slides



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Topic 2: Political Parties and Political Influences



Framing Question:

How do political parties, special interest groups, and the media affect how people participate in government?



Topic 2: Political Parties and Political Influences

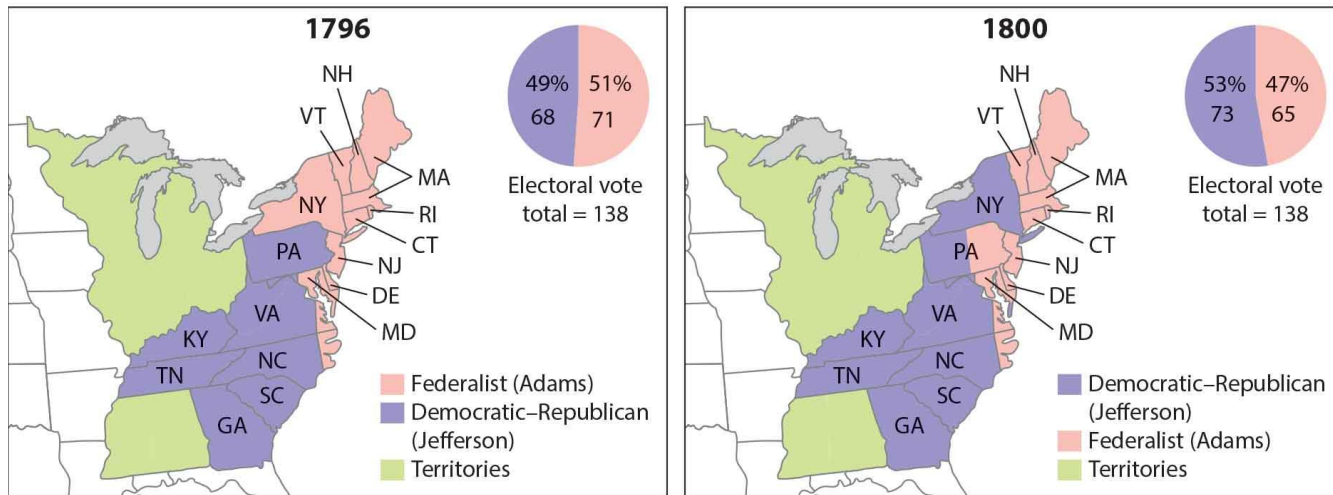


The September 1960 debate marked the first time two presidential candidates debated on national television. Kennedy is shown sitting on the left, and Nixon is on the right.



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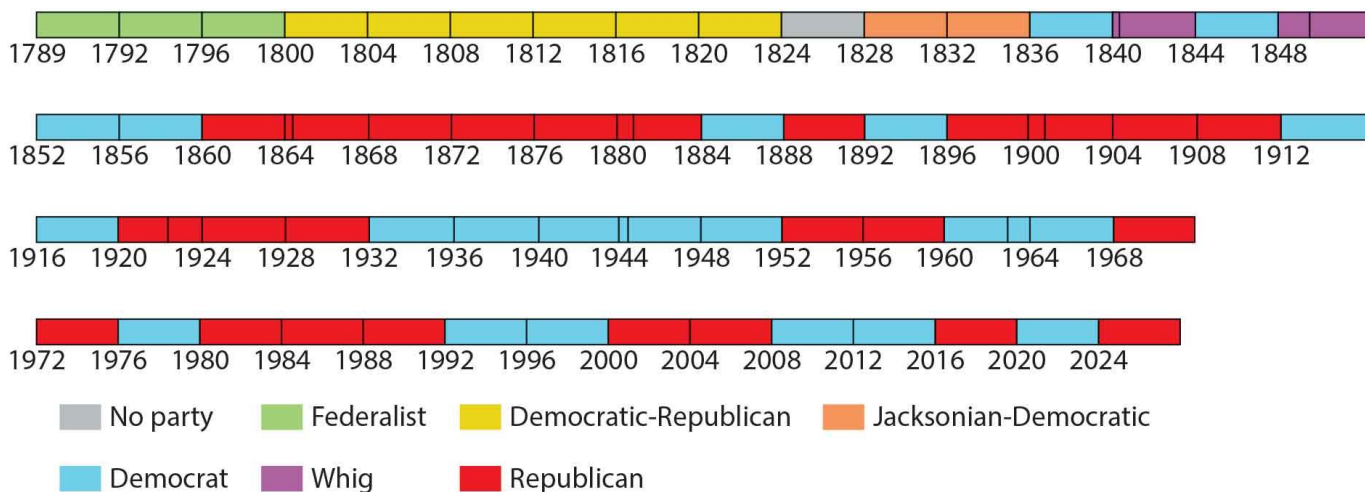
Presidential Elections of 1796 and 1800



The Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans were the first two major political parties to emerge in the United States. Note how the parties were divided along regional lines.

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Presidential Election Winners by Political Party, 1789–2024



This timeline shows the political party of every winner of a presidential election since the founding of the United States. Note that since 1852, there have been only two major parties: Democrat and Republican.



Historic Minor Parties in Presidential Elections, 1832–1912

Minor Party	Key Facts	Presidential Election Year, Percent of Popular Vote
Anti-Masonic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed as backlash to the Freemasons, a secret fraternal order that many American politicians belonged to dating back to colonial times Had many members who went on to join the Whig and Republican Parties 	1832, 8 percent
American (Know-Nothing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed as backlash to Irish and German immigration Advanced anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic policies 	1856, 22 percent
Southern Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Split from the Democratic Party over the issue of slavery Supported a federal law that expanded slavery into the territories 	1860, 18 percent
Constitutional Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed with the primary purpose of preserving the Union and preventing civil war Did not address the issue of slavery and worked to gain the support of border states 	1860, 13 percent
People's (Populist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed by farmers and by workers' unions in the Midwest and South in response to declining crop prices and discriminatory practices by lenders and railroads Supported unlimited minting of silver coins, public ownership of railroads and communication lines, and direct election of senators Influenced support for the Sixteenth Amendment (federal income tax) and the Seventeenth Amendment (popular election of senators) 	1892, 8 percent
Bull Moose (Progressive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed by former president Theodore Roosevelt as an act of protest when he failed to secure the Republican nomination over his successor and the incumbent, William Howard Taft Supported a variety of social, political, and economic reforms, including women's suffrage, new banking regulations, and an easier constitutional amendment process 	1912, 27 percent
Socialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed in response to growing wealth and influence of corporations and industrialists Advocated replacing private enterprise with collective ownership of businesses 	1912, 6 percent

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The United States has had dozens of minor parties throughout its history. This table shows a few notable parties, starting with the country's first minor party, the Anti-Masonic Party. Note how some minor parties competed against each other in the same presidential election year.



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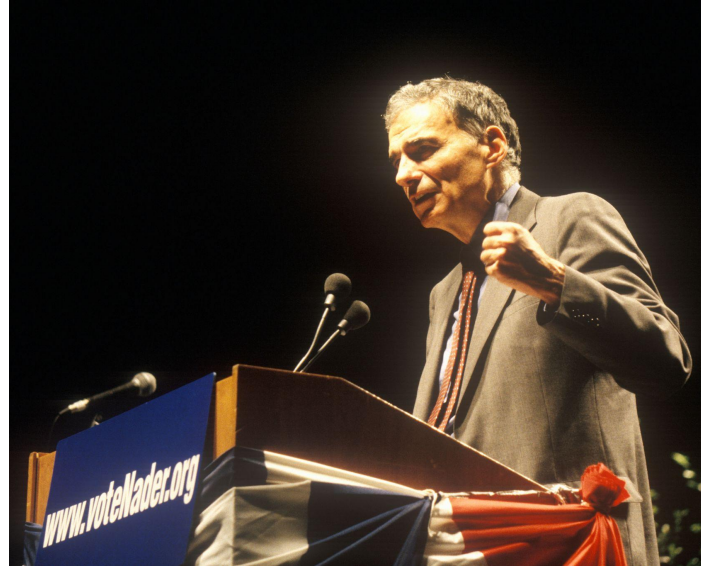
The Whig Party was a major political party until the mid-1850s. This campaign poster for the 1852 election shows the last two Whig candidates to run for president and vice president, Winfield Scott (left) and William Graham (right).

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Two minor parties — the Southern Democrats and the Constitutional Unionists — competed in the 1860 presidential election, in addition to the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. This political cartoon shows the four parties dividing the country along sectional lines.

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H. Ross Perot (left) ran as an independent candidate in 1992 and established the Reform Party in 1996. Ralph Nader (right) ran as the Green Party's presidential nominee in four consecutive elections.



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Political Party Organization

National Committee

- Coordinates presidential and congressional election campaigns
- Organizes national party conventions
- Drafts the national party platform



State Committee

- Coordinates county, gubernatorial, and state judicial and congressional election campaigns
- Organizes state party conventions and nominates delegates to national conventions
- Drafts the state party platform
- Recruits candidates, fundraises, and mobilizes voters across the state



Local Committee

- Coordinates local election campaigns
- Nominates delegates to state party conventions
- Recruits candidates, fundraises, and mobilizes voters across the local community



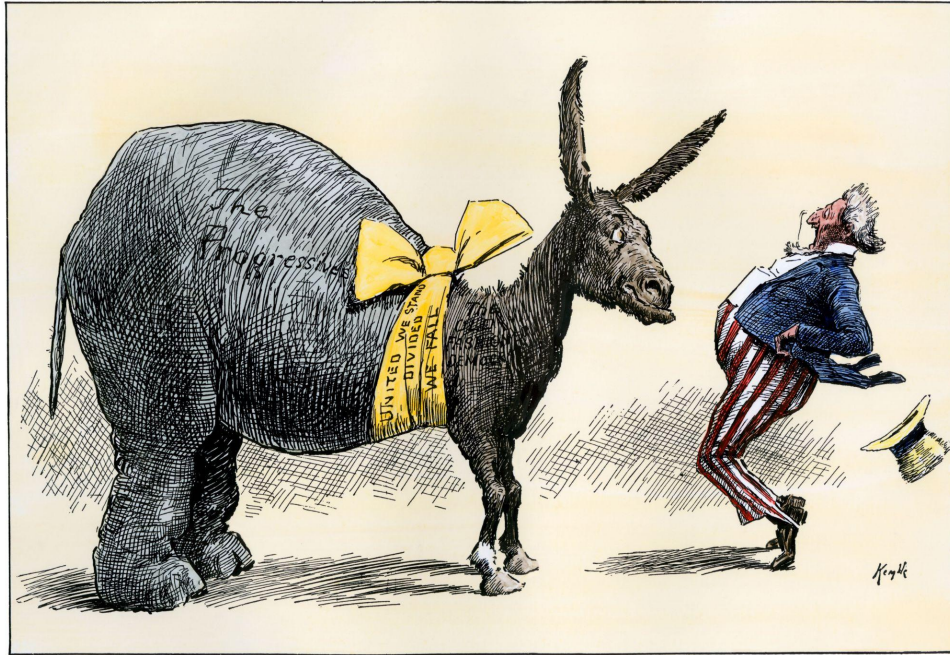
Precinct Organization

- Recruits candidates to local committee
- Selects precinct officials from local committee's members
- Registers and mobilizes voters

The way political parties are organized is a reflection of the three levels of U.S. government: federal, state, and local.



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"SAY, UNCLE, WE'VE CUT LOOSE FROM THE OLD PARTIES, AND DECIDED TO COME TOGETHER AND FORM A NEW PARTY. CAN YOU SUGGEST A NAME?"

Since the 1800s, the Democratic Party has been represented by a donkey and the Republican Party by an elephant. This political cartoon from the early 1900s suggests that members of both parties work together to enact legislation.

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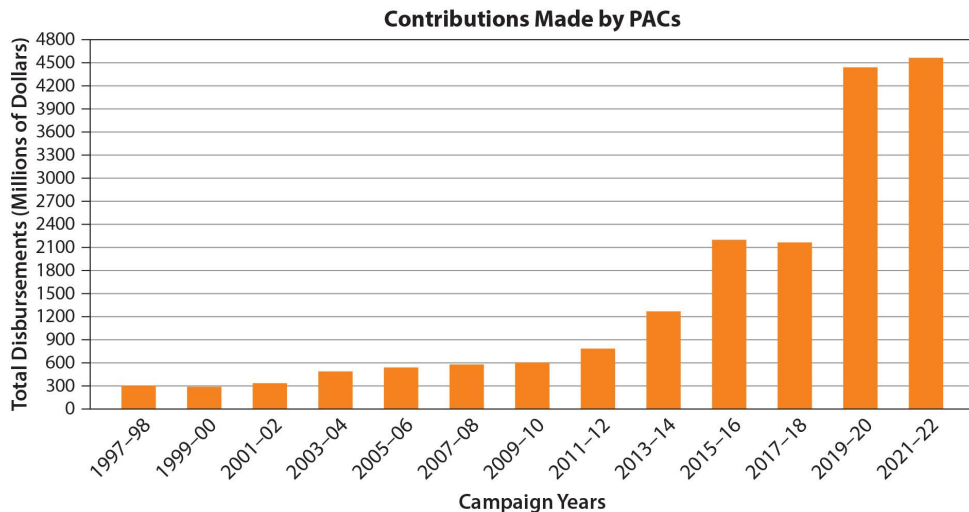
Types of Special Interest Groups

Type	Description	Examples
Membership organizations	Made up of individuals with shared beliefs, concerns, or interests; typically collect dues from members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)• Vietnam Veterans of America• American Association of People with Disabilities
Corporate interest groups	Represent companies and corporations; do not have individual members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coca-Cola• Verizon
Association interest groups	Made up of groups within the same industry that work together to advance shared interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• American Beverage Association• National Association of Manufacturers• National Restaurant Association
Government interest groups	Made up of local, state, and foreign governments; have goals that range from increasing autonomy to gaining a greater share of the federal budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Education• National League of Cities• National Conference of Mayors
Public interest groups	Work for the benefit of all or most of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Affordable Housing Network• Environmental Defense Fund

Special interest groups can greatly impact policy change for specific segments of society.



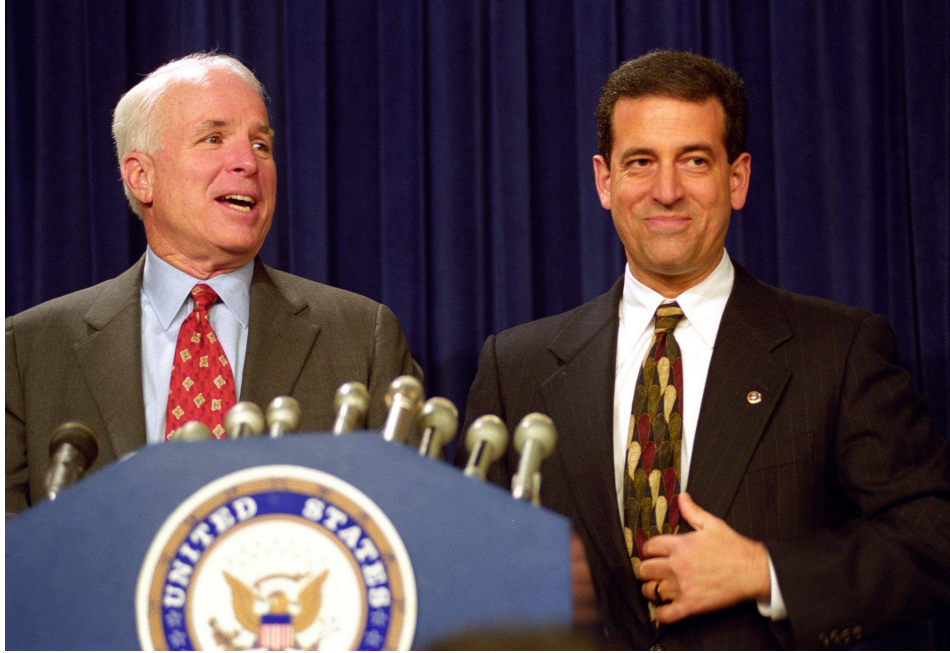
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Campaign contributions by political action committees (PACs) have steadily increased over time, making them an influential part of the election process.



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Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold worked for years to pass the BCRA through Congress.



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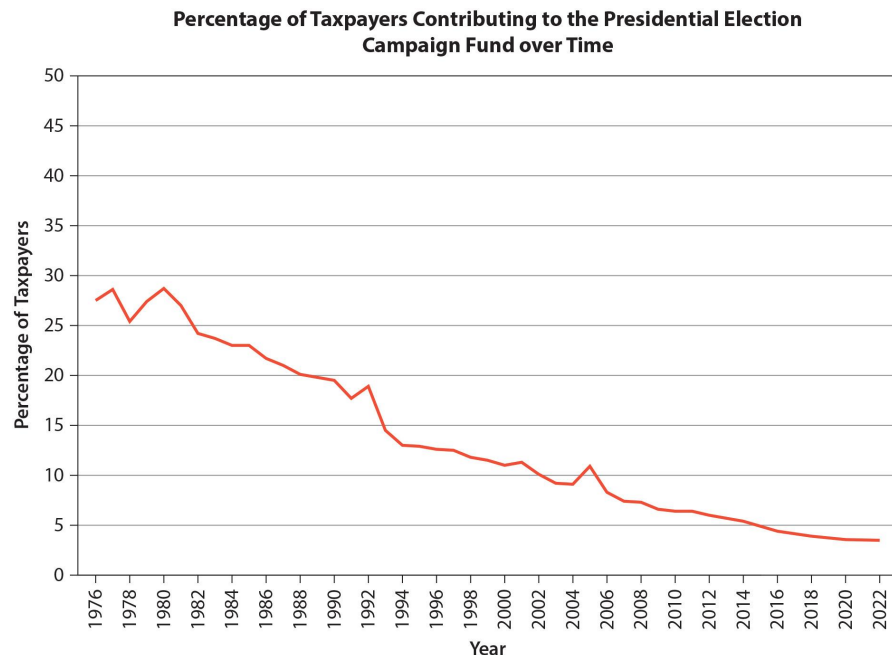
Contribution Limits for 2023–24 Federal Elections

Donors	Recipients				
	Candidate Committee	PAC (SSF and Nonconnected)	State/District/Local Party Committee	National Party Committee	Additional National Party Committee Accounts
Individual	\$3,300 per election	\$5,000 per year	\$10,000 per year (combined)	\$41,300 per year	\$123,900 per account per year
Candidate Committee	\$2,000 per election	\$5,000 per year	Unlimited transfers	Unlimited transfers	
PAC (Multicandidate)	\$5,000 per election	\$5,000 per year	\$5,000 per year (combined)	\$15,000 per year	\$45,000 per account per year
PAC (Non-multicandidate)	\$3,300 per election	\$5,000 per year	\$10,000 per year (combined)	\$41,300 per year	\$123,900 per account per year
State/District/Local Party Committee	\$5,000 per election	\$5,000 per year	Unlimited transfers		
National Party Committee	\$5,000 per election	\$5,000 per year			

The federal government establishes contribution limits that individuals, PACs, and political parties may make to specific entities. This chart shows the contribution limits for federal elections in 2023 and 2024.



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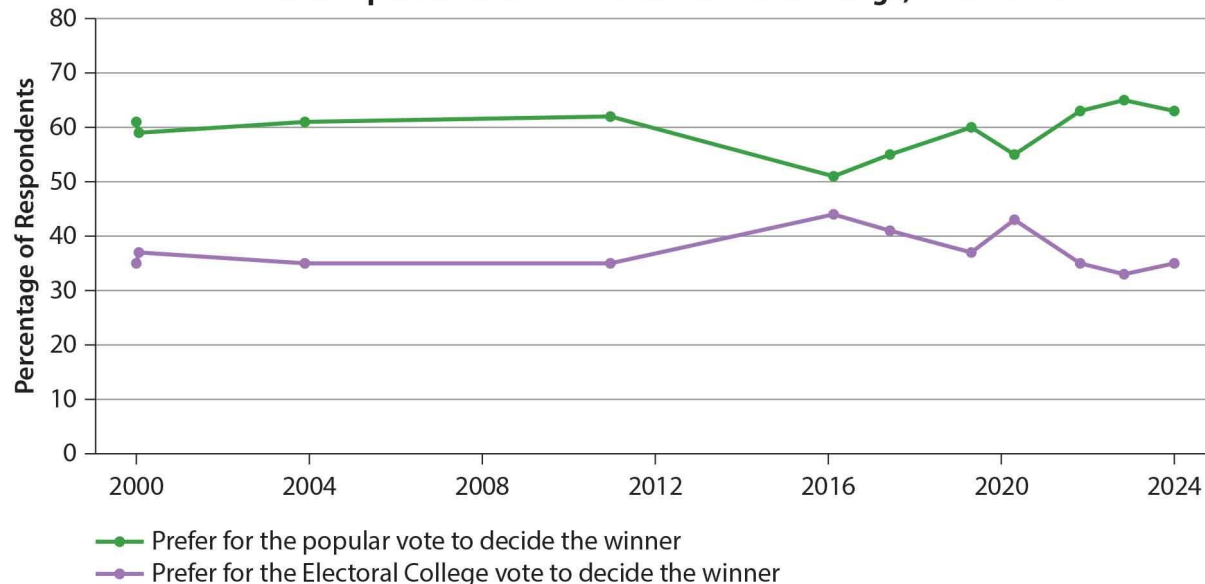


Today, people have the option to contribute to the PECF when they file their taxes. However, the percentage of taxpayers who exercise this option has declined considerably over time.



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Public Opinion on the Use of the Electoral College, 2000–2024



This graph shows the results of a public opinion poll conducted in 2024. Respondents were asked whether they believed the use of the Electoral College in presidential elections should continue or if the popular vote should determine who becomes president.



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Social media has had a profound effect on politics in the United States. Today, candidates can announce news and positions in real time, reaching their followers instantaneously.



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Walter Cronkite's reporting on the Vietnam War helped change public opinion about the war.

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President Barack Obama is considered the country's first "social media president." This photograph, taken in 2012, shows Obama in the private residence of the White House during a live social media chat.



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The two Presidential nominees from the two major parties are seen in three photos on a television screen during their nationally televised debate on 9-26-60. Top: Senator Kennedy, moderator Howard K. Smith; and Vice-President Richard Nixon. Bottom left, Senator Kennedy; Right Vice-President Nixon (b/w photo)/GG Vintage Images / UIG / Bridgeman Images: 4

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