

THE NATION'S BEGINNINGS
Issues Connector: Sectionalism and National Politics

The United States began as a loose collection of thirteen states with different economic interests and social ideologies. Throughout the past 200 years, the United States has struggled to reconcile many different and often conflicting political, economic, social, and religious ideas.

Three-fifths Compromise (1787)

From the beginning, competing interests in the states had to compromise with each other. Small states, large states, industrial states, agricultural states, and northern and southern states all wanted to structure the national government in a way that most favored them. The "three-fifths" clause in Article I came about as a compromise between southern states, who wanted to count enslaved people as part of their population for purposes of Congressional representation, and northern states, who did not want to count enslaved people. Southern states feared that northern states would dominate Congress because they had a larger white population. James Wilson of Pennsylvania proposed the three-fifths compromise to appease the southern delegates. By counting three-fifths of enslaved people, the southern states obtained almost half of the seats in the first Congress. The Fourteenth Amendment, passed in 1866, abolished the three-fifths clause.

War of 1812 (1812)

The War of 1812 divided the nation along geographic and party lines. Many people opposed getting involved in the conflict between Britain and France, but others insisted that the European nations had invaded the United States by impeding trade, seizing American sailors, and inciting conflict with Native American groups. Southern and western leaders, in particular, became convinced that the nation had to go to war to secure its trading rights and to take control of western territories. However, northern industrialists and businesspeople vehemently opposed the war. Some even spoke of secession. In 1814, a group of New England Federalists met in Hartford, Connecticut, to draft resolutions against the war and constitutional amendments restricting Congress's war-making powers. Their efforts led to the demise of the Federalist Party when they arrived in Washington to present their resolutions just as news reached the nation that a peace treaty had been signed.

Tariffs (1816-1832)

In the early 1800s, the United States began imposing tariffs, or taxes, on European imports to protect domestic manufacturing by raising the prices of European goods. These tariffs favored northern commercial interests but hurt the South because southern states did not have a manufacturing base. For people in the South, it just meant higher prices. When the tariffs were increased and expanded in 1824, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina accused the North of abusing federal power to redistribute wealth from the South to

the North. Several years later, he argued that the Tariff of 1828, which he called the "Tariff of Abominations," was unconstitutional because it benefited northern states at the expense of southern states. Calhoun claimed the right of the southern states to nullify, or make void, the tariff laws, and to secede, or leave the Union, if Congress enforced the laws. When a new tariff in 1832 only slightly changed the earlier tariff, the South Carolina legislature adopted the Ordinance of Nullification and threatened secession. However, none of the other southern states joined South Carolina's resistance. Congress responded by passing a reduced tariff and authorizing President Andrew Jackson to use force. South Carolina rescinded its nullification.

Civil War (1861)

The United States had narrowly averted a secession crisis in the 1830s. In 1861, the political, social, and economic conflicts surpassed the point of compromise. The South had little industrial capacity and centered around an agricultural plantation economy that relied on enslaved laborers. The North had an advanced industrial economy, which depended on manufacturing and had already outlawed the institution of slavery. During the presidential election of 1860, the differences between the North and the South split the nation. Abraham Lincoln asserted the federal government's authority over the states and won the election as a member of the antislavery Republican Party. Lincoln's victory prompted several southern states to secede based upon the same principle of states' rights that South Carolina had tried to invoke in 1832. Seven states seceded from the Union following Lincoln's election; four more seceded when Lincoln led the Union to war. The Civil War lasted four years, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans, devastated the southern states, and left deep divisions within the nation.

Presidential Election, 2004

The presidential elections in 2000 and 2004 rank among the most divisive in U.S. history. Maps depicting election results by state indicate that southern, midwestern and western states consistently support the socially conservative Republican party, and that northeastern and Pacific Coast states back the more liberal Democratic party. These labels, and the maps, can be misleading. In 2000, both Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush received approximately 48 percent of the vote: Gore won the popular vote by about 500,000 votes but Bush won the electoral vote when the Supreme Court ruled against conducting a recount of contested Florida ballots. In 2004, President Bush won 51 percent of the vote over Democrat John Kerry's 48 percent. Although the states divided along predicted lines, many districts in "red" Republican states voted Democratic, and many districts in "blue" Democratic states voted Republican. Political, social, and economic interests continue to divide the American people, but they do so within as well as among states.

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Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

"Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states . . . according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons . . . and excluding [Native Americans] not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons."
 —Article I, Section 2, U.S. Constitution, 1787

"A deliberate and [vast] system [exists] for effecting a combination among certain states, by exciting local jealousies and ambitions, so as to secure to popular leaders in one section of the Union, the control of public affairs . . ."

—Report and Resolutions of the Hartford Convention, 1815

"[W]e, the People of South Carolina . . . do further declare . . . that we will consider the passage, by Congress, of any act . . . to coerce the State . . . or to enforce the acts hereby declared to be null and void . . . as inconsistent with the longer continuance of South Carolina in the Union . . ."

—South Carolina Ordinance of Nullification, 1832

"There are no red states or blue states, just American states."
 —Howard Dean, former Governor of Vermont, 2004

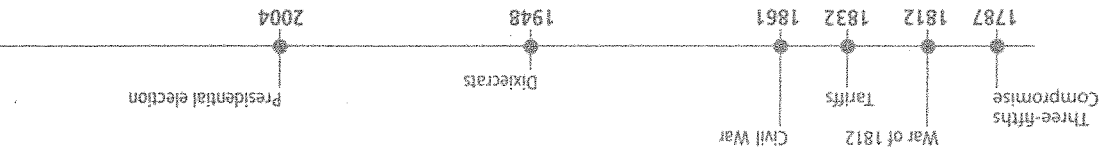
"[The northern states] have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States, whose opinions and purposes are . . . hostile to the South, and destructive of its beliefs and safety. . . ."

—Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union, 1860

"It is now for [the U.S. government] to demonstrate to the world that those who can fairly carry an election can also suppress a rebellion . . ."

—President Abraham Lincoln, War Address, 1861

"[I]t's clear that there is a growing sectionalism in American society, and that this growing sectionalism has already led to open contempt between some regions of the country and others. Not only is there a geographical division, but there are also a lot of different demographic groups pitted against one other . . . The Republican party has support from primarily white men, married women, a large portion of Hispanics, rural voters, and the religious right. The Democratic party, on the other hand, has single women, minorities, and young people."
 —John Horvath, "Election Fallout," 2004



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Directions: Read the quotations on the previous page and answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What does the report of the Hartford Convention say that some states were trying to do?
2. What actions caused South Carolina to attempt to dissolve the union between themselves and other states in 1832 and 1860?
3. What does Lincoln state that the United States government has to prove?
4. According to John Horvath, what differences exist between Republicans and Democrats?
5. **Apply Information** What sectional difference does Article I, Section 2, of the U.S. Constitution, as written in 1787, try to address?
6. **Draw Conclusions** Do you think South Carolina had the right to nullify federal law? Explain your answer.
7. **Draw Inferences** Why do you think Dean denies the "red state/blue state" distinction?
8. **Link Past and Present** How do you think regional differences affect national politics today?