**Formal/informal functions of National Party Conventions**

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| Advantages  FORMAL   * Choosing the party's presidential candidate- roll call vote. but could be argued it confirms rather than choses the candidate * Choosing the VP candidate- this has been lost * Deciding Party Platform- a document containing policies that the candidate intends to pursue if elected president used to win supporters- it is put together by the platform committee under direction of party's national committee- The Platform committee holds hearings around the country in first 6 months of election year: * in 2008 Democrats held more than 1,600 listening sessions in communities across all states, in which nearly 30,000 people from all walks of life participated * Republicans invited visitors to their website to share your thoughts, participate in polls and communicate directly with policy makers- who will be shaping party's agenda * The national committee then agrees to draft platform then presents to delegates at NPC- may be debates on various parts however, often avoided heated debates because media portray this as a 'divided party' * 2012- Republicans party platform on abortion was right to life, whereas democrats supported Roe V Wade | Disadvantages  INFORMAL   * promoting party unity- may be most important function of all: * primaries can turn into fierce personal battles and vital internal party wounds are healed before the GE campaign begins. Divided parties are rarely winning parties- convention offers opportunity to unite * 2008 important democrat convention bitter personal rivalries between Obama and Clinton- widely thought hers for the taking- she suggested he was inexperienced and didn't have leadership qualities. But both Clintons endorsed him at the convention, she declared herself a proud supporter. * 2008 Ron Paul (R congressman) who had significant support in R Caucuses and primaries refused to endorse McCain * Enthusing Party Faithful- vital that the party faithful in all 50 states feel enthusiastic and committed as they head home to fight for their party and candidate during a 9 week campaign * ideal opportunity to enthuse through speeches and appearances of party's past champions and heroes * 2012- the speech by Bill Clinton had the audience on their feet and it clearly excited the faithful to fight for Obama's re election * Enthusing Ordinary Voters- can't be present in convention hall so publicised through the TV, golden opportunity to gain attention of the ordinary voters during the convention and thats when a candidate delivers acceptance speech (naturally televised) * voters pay little attention up to this point so first impressions can be important esp. if running for national office for the first time i.e. Bush 2000 or Trump 2016 * opinion polls before and after 'bounce' (average +6, below average if below 6) 2012 Romney -1 and Obama +3 * Modern day conventions importance- * A Washington Post- ABC news poll 2008 asked how important were conventions to helping you decide your vote? * 29%= important * 71%= less important * 12%= extremely important |
| Evaluation  The informal functions are of greater importance because they can unite the party, excite the party faithful and influence ordinary voters at home. However, polls suggest they are still of little importance when it comes to choosing a candidate | |