





- 1  **Politics in the Gilded Age**
- 2  **Political Machines**
 - Political Machines – well organized political party that dominates and gets members elected to local political offices
 - Political Bosses – Dictated party positions and made deals with business leaders
 - Also, controlled district leaders, city officials, and council members that keep machine running
 - Political bosses help to finance public works projects and distribute jobs among loyal supporters
 - Political Machines are able to win support by all services they provide which gives them votes
- 3  **Political Machines**
 - Political Machines would send people to Ellis Island to help new immigrants get settled thus gaining their support
 - Would also provide jobs for votes
 - Most PM's maintained their political power with support of immigrants
 - Boston is one example, Irish Americans made up 1/3 of city's voters and held many important positions inside PM
 - PM's often would resort to corruption to take control of city governments
 - Election fraud was highly prevalent, one election in Philadelphia had a voting district of 100 return 252 votes
- 4  **Political Machines**
 - Once inside city governments political bosses looked to get rich, used a process entitled graft, big problem in cities that had powerful political machines
 - Graft – gaining money or political power through illegal or dishonest methods
 - Politicians would receive bribes, payoffs, or kickbacks to entice them to vote in favor of things
 - William Tweed was a legendary Political Boss who collected over \$200 million in graft b/w 1865 – 1871
 - Exposed by Thomas Nast who drew political cartoons that showed the corruption exuded by Tweed

5 **Restoring Honest Government**

- Grants first term marked by scandals
- Financiers tried to gain a monopoly in the gold market
- Grants VP Schuyler Colfax involved in scandal five years prior to him becoming VP
- Colfax became a stock holder in a company that had a contract with Union Pacific and every time UP would be given more land to build railroads congressmen would be given this stock
- Company was a construction company, Credit Mobilier, that had a contract to build railroads with UP
- Would overcharge UP by \$20 million, and those profits would go to stock holders, aka members of congress

6 **Restoring Honest Government**

- Grant elected to 2nd term despite corruption of first term
 - Played on his image as a war hero and easily won reelection
- Opponent was Horace Greeley who ran on the premise of civil service reform
- Corruption continues in Grants second term
 - Taxation of whiskey is scandal, people in Treasury Department had accepted bribes from distillers and distributors
- Reformers wanted to end fraud under the spoils system
 - Given a job b/c of support or friend of group in power
- The “Gilded Age” caused many voters to lose trust in government and be very skeptical

7 **Restoring Honest Government**

- Rutherford B. Hayes wins election of 1876 and begins to reform the spoils system, causes split in Republican party
 - Hayes wanted jobs awarded by merit not patronage
- Hayes did not run for reelection stating he was tired of all the responsibility
- James A. Garfield runs as the Republican candidate and wins Presidency in 1880 by only 10,000 votes
- Garfield is assassinated 4 months later by Charles Guiteau, did it b/c he wanted to further the cause of Republican party

who opposed Garfield (remember the split in the Republican party at this time)

- Assassination has opposite effect and civil service reform is underway

8 **Restoring Honest Government**

- President Arthur passes Pendleton Civil Service Act
 - Established Civil Service Commission to administer competitive exams to people seeking government jobs
- Grover Cleveland wins Presidential election of 1884
- Cleveland wanted to be known as a reformer, doubled the jobs that required civil service exams, angers many
- Cleveland runs in 1888 as a Democrat against Republican Benjamin Harrison, Cleveland wins popular vote by 100,000 but loses electoral vote and Harrison becomes President
- Quickly set out to reward supporters and undo Cleveland's reform efforts
- Spent money so freely became known as Billion Dollar Congress

9 **Populist Movement**

- Surge in Industrialization in late 1800's changed farmers' lives significantly
- Population was growing so farmers planted more and raised more animals but so did other countries so supply far exceeded demand
- Farmers though situation was unfair, they lost money while everybody else profited
 - Ex: Manufacturers, railroads, and banks
- Farmers began to organize and form cooperatives where they would pool their resources to buy and sell goods
- National Grange – argued for railroad regulation

10 **Populist Movement**

- Interstate Commerce Act passed in 1887, ICC (Interstate Commerce Commission) had little power to enforce rulings b/c

courts would almost always side with railroads

- Farmers Alliance like the Grange formed co-ops that would buy equipment and market products, they also gave low-cost insurance
 - Lobbied for government ownership of railroads, tougher bank regulations, and graduated income tax that taxed higher incomes at a higher rate
- In 1873 Congress votes to stop coining silver and convert money to gold standard
 - Each dollar was equal to and redeemable for set amount of gold

11 **Populist Movement**

- Conversion to gold standard decreased the amount of money in circulation
- This was not what the farmers wanted, they wanted more money in circulation
- Farmers demanded that the government back money supply with silver b/c it was plentiful in the west
- Government bows to pressure and passes Bland-Allison Act in 1878 and Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1890
- Alliance members disappointed threw their support in 1890 elections behind any candidate who backed the pro-farmer platform
- Results were great, Alliance-backed candidates gained 40 seats in Congress, 4 southern Governorships, and other political offices

12 **Populist Movement**

- Populist Party is formed by farmers, labor leaders, Alliance members, and reformers
- Party wanted graduated income tax, government ownership of railroads, bank regulation, and free and unlimited coinage of silver
 - Also wanted shorter work day, immigration restriction, and voting reforms

- Big Railroad company fails in 1893 and leads to economic depression, 3 million are left jobless
- Silver becomes central issue in 1896 election

13  **Populist Movement**

- William McKinley ran as the Republican nominee against the Democrat William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska
 - Bryan's strong support of silver-backed currency gained him support among populists in Democratic Party
- William McKinley wins election by 500,000 votes based off of the help of many business leaders who feared populism
- Election defeat and improvement in economic conditions for farmers brought an end to Populist Party