

# TEXAS VS NEW YORK

In November of 2012, voters in Texas and in New York participated in elections for one of their U.S. senators. Texas voters selected from four candidates: a Republican, a Democrat, a Green, and a Libertarian. In New York, voters selected from among candidates from eight different political parties. One key difference between the two elections was the fact that in New York three political parties selected and listed the same candidate for U.S. senator, Kirsten Gillibrand. She was the candidate for the Democratic Party, the Independence Party, and the Working Families Party. Her primary opponent, Wendy Long, ran as the Republican Party candidate and as the Conservative Party candidate. In New York, the ballot is laid out so every party and candidate appears separately. As a result, Kirsten Gillibrand's name appeared on the ballot three times and Wendy Long's name appeared twice. Three other candidates represented one political party each: the Green Party, the Libertarian Party, and the Common Sense Party.

The practice of two or more parties legally running the same candidate for office is called electoral fusion. Electoral fusion is allowed in a handful of states, including New York. While electoral fusion was once practiced in Texas as a means of protecting Democratic dominance, it is now illegal.

The practice of electoral fusion allowed voters to support Kirsten Gillibrand or Wendy Long without voting for either of the two major parties. In addition, during the campaign, both Gillibrand and Long had to address issues of concern not only for their respective party's base of voters but also for the additional parties that gave them a nomination.

- ★ How does electoral fusion allow third parties to participate in an election?
- ★ How does electoral fusion legitimize voting for third parties?
- ★ Why did Texas Democrats support electoral fusion in the past?
- ★ Why did the practice become illegal in Texas?

## U.S. Senate Election in New York, 2012

Candidate	Percentage of Votes	Party
Kirsten Gillibrand	67.4%	Democratic
Wendy Long	21.2%	Republican
Kirsten Gillibrand	3.5%	Working Families
Wendy Long	3.5%	Conservative
Kirsten Gillibrand	1.9%	Independence
Colia Clark	0.6%	Green
Chris Edes	0.4%	Libertarian
John Mangelli	0.3%	Common Sense

**Source:** New York State Board of Elections, "U.S. Senate Election Returns November 6, 2012," [http://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/elections/2012/General/USSenator\\_07292013.pdf](http://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/elections/2012/General/USSenator_07292013.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2016); some calculations by authors.

## THINKING Critically

- ★ What is electoral fusion?