**For Discussion**

1. Is classifying states as “red” or “blue” useful for explaining patterns in the American political system? What are some potential problems? What are some benefits? If the “red state/blue state” classification is not useful, what is a better way of explaining variation across states in terms of political attitudes and political participation?

2. What is the best type of ballot for state elections? For local elections? Should all states be forced to use the same type of ballot? What is the problem with allowing states to choose which types of ballot they would like to use?

3. Are nonpartisan elections good for democracy? Do nonpartisan elections reduce the amount of political bickering? Nebraska has nonpartisan elections for members of its unicameral state legislature. Would it be prudent for all states to adopt this method? What problems do nonpartisan elections pose for voters/parties/candidates?

4. Given the enormous legislative variation between states with and without direct democracy, should direct democracy be an all-or-nothing issue? That is, should direct democracy measures be adopted by all states or no states? Are there any steps states can take to control the initiative process?

5. As the chapter points out, direct democracy often is used to deal with salient issues. Should citizens be allowed to pass legislation dealing with such hot-button issues as gay marriage?