Campaign Trail 3000 - Battle for the Boards and Brains of Mechamerica! (Ver. 3)
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Description
Campaign Trail 3000 is a game about the discarded technology from long-dead human civilizations, running elections to keep their circuits warm. Through fast-paced card drafting gameplay, players run campaigns in a cartoonish, mechanized version of a presidential election. Each player competes with the others to capture the circuits and wires of the robotic voters and be elected "President of Mechamerica"!

Player Count and Materials
This game is intended for 4 Players ages 13+.
Each copy of Campaign Trail 3000 includes:
- One Stage Bonus Board
- Thirty-Six Player Character Tiles (Six/Player Character)
- Twenty-Four Processing Power Tokens (for use in making change)
- Four Fundraising Bonus Tokens
- Six Decks of Cards
  - One Exploratory Committee Deck
  - One Primary Campaign Deck
  - One General Election Deck
  - One October Surprise Deck
  - One October Surprise Event Deck
  - One Stage Bonus Deck

Content Warning:
This game is about campaigns, so it will brush up against political topics. While none of the political issues in Mechamerica are directly analogous to contemporary policy fights, some players may still find this uncomfortable or difficult. If this is the case, **this may not be the game for you**, and that's okay!

Overview of Gameplay
The core mechanic of Campaign Trail 3000 is simultaneous card drafting. Players pass hands of cards around the table, determining in the moment which policies to construct or resources to claim. **The main resource players will gain is Processing Power (or PP)**. In Mechamerica, **Processing Power acts as currency**. Any good campaign needs to research new policy proposals and run advertisements, so continuing to acquire more is critical to success.

Ultimately, players will strive to gather the most votes, gaining support from the different interest groups along the way.

There are four main groups of voters in Mechamerica:

1. **The Industrial Machines** – These tight-knit machines used to assist humans in manufacturing and construction work. They still occupy the abandoned factories and workplaces.
2. **The Office Automata** – Tucked away in corporate offices and cubicles, these business-minded automata continue to manage spreadsheets and conduct exchanges.
3. **The Hospitalitons** – Humans built all sorts of machines to assist them in Hospitality and Service work. In Mechamerica, they continue their duties, providing services for other robots instead of mankind.
4. **The Legacy Models** – Old or in need of repair, these robots depend more than most on the help of the Mechamerican government to get by. As a result, they're highly engaged in politics.

Each of these groups have their own priorities and policies associated with them, and each can provide their own boons to a campaign who is courting their support. Players are encouraged to play multiple times, experimenting with different strategies and interest groups.

Setup
Players choose which of the Mechamerican politicians as whom they wish to play. Once they have done so, they take the set of corresponding **player character tiles**. There should be six for each character.

Place the **Stage Bonus Board** in the center of the table. Set aside the four **Fundraising Bonus Tokens**. Take out the six decks of cards. Place the Stage Bonus Cards on the corresponding spaces on the board and shuffle the other decks. Set aside the shuffled decks, save for the **Exploratory Committee Deck**. Deal four hands of six cards each, and distribute them to the players.
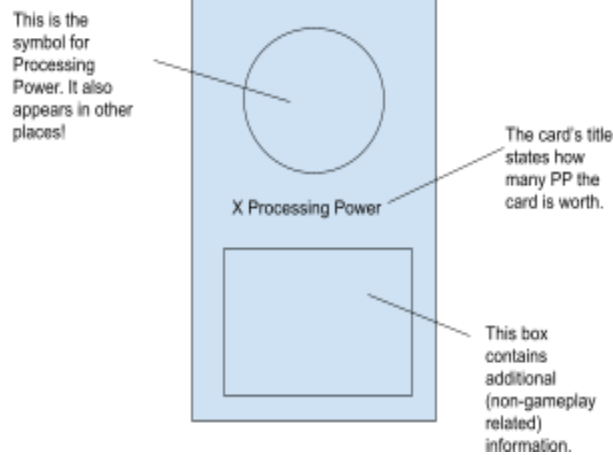
Gameplay
The Mechamerican election season is divided into **four distinct stages**:

1. **Exploratory Committee**
2. **Primary Campaign**
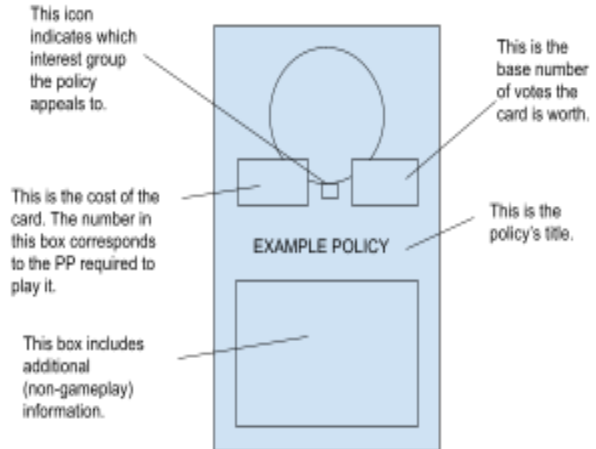3. **General Election**
4. **October Surprise**

Each stage of the campaign takes place over the course of **five turns**. Players take their turns **simultaneously**.

During any turn, a player will have a set of cards in their hand. Cards can be either **Processing Power Cards** or **Policy Cards**.

PP Cards

This is the symbol for Processing Power. It also appears in other places!

X Processing Power

The card's title states how many PP the card is worth.

This box contains additional (non-gameplay related) information.

Policy Cards

This icon indicates which interest group the policy appeals to.

This is the cost of the card. The number in this box corresponds to the PP required to play it.

EXAMPLE POLICY

This is the base number of votes the card is worth.

This is the policy's title.

This box includes additional (non-gameplay) information.

Options During a Turn

During a turn, players have three options. They can either **play a card**, **discard a card**, or **claim a stage bonus**. <u>**They may only take one of these actions per turn.**</u>

If they choose to play a card, they can do so, so long as they meet the Processing Power requirement listed on the card. When playing a policy, players discard the requisite amount of processing power. They may make change as needed, using previously discarded Processing Power cards or the supplemental Processing Power tokens. Processing Power cards have no requirements and may be played for free.

If they choose to discard a card, they will receive the base amount of processing power available for the current stage of the campaign. This amount is as follows:

    I.   1 PP
   II.   2 PP
  III.   3 PP
  IV.   6 PP

This action is required if players do not have any other choices available to them.

Finally, players can **forgo the chance to play a card on their turn**, and instead **claim a stage bonus**. In order to do so, **players must meet the requirements for the bonuses**, having the requisite amount of PP and number of policies for the interest group whose bonus they wish to claim. When claiming a bonus, the player will **choose one card in their current hand to discard**. They will then **discard this card and the requisite number of PP** to meet the bonus requirement, replacing the stage bonus card in the place that corresponds to the bonus they are claiming with their clear Player Character tile.

Stage bonuses cannot be claimed out of order, and can only be claimed once. Players may, however, claim the lowest available bonus even if they were not the one to claim a lower level bonus from that interest group. In the event that two players attempt to claim the same policy at the same time, the player who claims it is determined via a coin flip. As consolation, the player who does not receive the bonus will instead gain the amount of processing power which would have been required to purchase it.

Industrial Machinery	Hospitalitons	Legacy Models	Office Automata
Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies: At the end of the game, you can choose any one card to score twice.	Small Dollar Donor Support: The first PP card played in any subsequent stage of the campaign is worth twice as much.	Grassroots Volunteers: If you gain a fundraiser bonus token, the next policy you construct costs only 2 PP.	Consistent Donor Base: Permanently gain 1 PP for each campaign stage that has passed (i.e. in stage three you would have 2 permanent PP).
Factory Union Endorsement: Building Duplicates of any Industrial Machinery Policy is Free.	Culinary Union Endorsement: Instantly construct one previously discarded policy or PP card.	Former President's Endorsement: At the end of the game, gain one additional vote for every two Legacy Model policies you've constructed.	Chamber of Commerce Endorsement: Spend 2 PP less on future Office Automata Policies.
Campaign Material Production Contract: Instantly Gain 3 PP for each Industrial Machinery policy you have constructed.	New Media Tour: Instantly Gain 3 PP for each Hospitaliton policy you have constructed.	Evenly Distributed Base: Other Interest Groups' stage bonuses require one less policy to claim.	Voter Outreach Software Development: Gain one vote for every 3 PP you have left over at the end of the game.
Factory Floor Turnout Operation: If you and your opponent have constructed the same policy, they receive two-thirds of the votes from that policy, rounded down. A policy cannot be worth less than one vote.	Populist Movement: Gain two votes. At the end of the game, for every two Hospitaliton policies you have constructed, multiply these two votes by two. (for example, constructing 8 policies will earn you 32 votes (2 x (2 x 2 x 2 x 2))	Strong Senior Turnout: Double the number of votes you receive from legacy model policies.	Advanced Advertising Research: At the end of the game, gain an additional 3 votes for each fundraiser bonus token you have. If you have no fundraiser bonus tokens, gain 1/3 of your PP in votes, rounded down.

Moving From Turn to Turn

When players have chosen their action for the turn, they place the card they are planning to play or discard onto the table face-down. Once all players have done so, they will reveal their action to each other, placing new cards face up in front of them and discarding or taking Processing Power as necessary. Then, they pass their decks, either clockwise in odd-numbered campaign stages or counter-clockwise in even-numbered ones.

When the players are passed only one card, they are **required to discard it**, gaining the same amount of PP as they would from a standard discard. At this point, the stage ends.

Transitioning to the Next Stage

After the final cards for each stage are discarded, players should tally up their Processing Power. Whichever player has the most receives the Fundraising Bonus token for that era, representing the advantage they gained from advertising. These tokens provide additional votes at the end of the game. If two players tie for the most PP, nobody receives the token, as nobody has established a commanding fundraising lead.

If the next stage **is not** the October Surprise stage, take out the corresponding deck and deal hands of six cards. Distribute them among the players, and begin as normal.
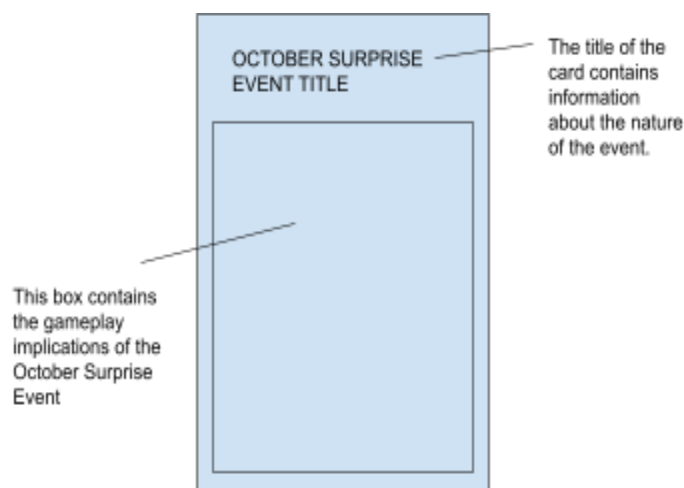
If the next stage **is** the October Surprise stage, take out the October Surprise Events deck, and have each player draw a card, keeping it face down until all players have drawn their own. Then, each player should read out the event they drew, and resolve the events according to the instructions on the card. Then, take out the final deck and deal hands of six cards, Distributing them among the players.

October Surprise Events
October Surprise Event cards each have a different effect, which can shift the landscape of the race and throw wrenches into your strategy. It's important to be ready to adjust accordingly.

The following are two examples of October Surprise Events:

1. Major Donor Backs Out: Lose 10 PP instantly and discard cards accordingly. This cannot make you fall below 0 PP.
2. Disastrous Debate Performance: At the end of the game, lose 8 votes.

OCTOBER SURPRISE EVENT TITLE — The title of the card contains information about the nature of the event.

This box contains the gameplay implications of the October Surprise Event

Ending the Game and Scoring
After all stages have been completed, players should tally their scores in this order:

1. Tally votes gained from Industrial Machine policies and stage bonuses
2. Tally votes gained from Hospitaliton policies and stage bonuses
3. Tally votes gained from Legacy Model policies and stage bonuses
4. Tally votes gained from Office Automata policies and stage bonuses
5. Add votes gained from Fundraising Bonus tokens according to the following:

   Exploratory Committee: 2 votes
   Primary Campaign: 4 votes

> General Election: 8 votes
> October Surprise: 12 votes

6. Resolve any unresolved October Surprise Events.

After the votes have been tallied, whoever has the highest score is declared the winner and is elected the next President of Mechamerica. In the event of a tie, whoever gained more Fundraising Bonus tokens wins. If this is also a tie, whoever has a higher level stage bonus wins. If all of these factors are tied, the players will play rock-paper-scissors (best two of three) to win.

Retiring from the Campaign
Players can choose to leave the campaign trail at any time, dropping out and "endorsing" another candidate. They give one of their previously played cards to a different candidate, remove their player character tiles from the board and discard any remaining cards they have played. In future stages, when dealing the cards, deal one fewer card per hand. Discard any undealt cards. The final card in each hand is still discarded, shortening the rounds by one turn.

Debriefing Tools for the Classroom
The following are some questions which may be useful to educators or students utilizing this game in a classroom setting. Those wishing to use them are encouraged to mix and match the ones they ask different groups of students, and to use them as a jumping-off point for wider discussion.

1. Think about the strategy you employed throughout the campaign season. How effective was it? What does this suggest about typical campaign strategies?
2. In the fourth stage of the campaign, a wrench was thrown into the campaign through the introduction of October Surprise Events. What does this tell you about uncertainty in presidential elections? How did you account for the disadvantages you were saddled with?
3. Throughout the game, you had to decide between acquiring Processing Power and announcing Policies. Why did you make the choices you did? How does this mirror real-world campaigns you have seen?
4. How does this campaign differ from real American elections? Is there a major difference? What about international Presidential elections?
5. How did you feel as the campaign progressed? If you moved between the lead and the back, how did it feel? Were the standings at the end of the game as you expected?
6. Are there any major political strategies or factions missing here? If so, explain what you think they are, and how they might be implemented.
7. How do the different interest groups you courted compare to real-world interest groups? What sorts of policies would you announce to appeal to the the real analogues for these groups?

8. Think about the Stage Bonuses. What do they tell you about the priorities and capabilities of the different interest groups? What does it suggest about the benefits of appealing to one or multiple groups in an election?

Debrief Tools for Casual Gameplay/Playtesting
The following are questions which may be useful in breaking down the mechanical and emotional experience of the game. These can be used in a classroom, but they may also be useful for those who are playing the game in a non-educational setting. They are also useful for gaining feedback from playtesters. If this is you, please give us your thoughts.

Reflect: This is an opportunity to discuss in groups or one large group (depending on population) the initial emotional, physical and cognitive reaction to the game.
- How did you feel throughout the game, and how often did those feelings shift?
- What did you enjoy the most or the least? Can be aesthetics, mechanics, gameplay interaction, social interactions, specific moments, etc.
- What was difficult or seemed difficult, and do you think that difficulty might persist into future games?

Reconnect: This is an opportunity to reintroduce the class material, and an opportunity to discuss how participating in the game affected your perception and understanding of the campaign process and political engagement.
- How does the game's abstract representation of an election campaign process compare to real-world processes and outcomes?
- What parts of the game were you able to connect to reality, and what aspects were you not able to?
- What do you feel you learned, or understood better after playing the game?

Reassess: This is an opportunity to converse on the effectiveness of the game, where one can offer criticism and compliments (Stars and Wishes).
- What rules, if any, would you change, and why?
- Did you think the game was effective or ineffective in its goals of reinforcing the learned materials and creating a better understanding of the dynamics of an election campaign process?
- What worked best?
- What didn't work?