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Party Politics in America

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Indiana University

Foreword by

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FOREWORD

Why should you be interested in studying political parties? The short answer is that virtually everything important in American politics is rooted in party politics. Political parties are at the core of American democracy and make it what it is today—just as they have virtually from the Founding.

Why should you use this book to guide you in the search for understanding democratic politics in America? The short answer is that this book is the best guide you can have, and it has been the best guide in this search for quite a long time. Now, let's turn to the longer answers.

I first encountered this text at the same stage in my life you are in now: as an undergraduate, although in my case that was back in the 1960s. At that point, the book was authored by an up-and-coming scholar named Frank Sorauf.¹ Following on the heels of his important study of the effect of political parties on the Pennsylvania legislature,² *Party Politics in America* established him as arguably the leading scholar of political parties of his generation. In those days—less so today—it was common for a “textbook” (i.e., a book designed to be used in class) to do more than just tell you what others had written about its subject. Rather, books written for undergraduates were also designed to make a coherent argument about its subject matter—to engage you, the reader, intellectually. So it was then, and with this book, so it remains today.

In the sixth edition, published in 1988, Frank brought in Paul Allen Beck as coauthor. Paul took over the authorial duties beginning with that edition, and Marjorie Randon Hershey did so beginning with the ninth edition in 2001, leading to the book that you are about to read today. Each did so with considerable respect for the substance and the perspective that characterized the previous editions. This has brought a high degree of intellectual continuity to *Party Politics in America*. There are several important continuities. First, Sorauf, Beck, and Hershey very effectively use a three-part division in the discussion of political parties. More specifically, they divide the political party into its electoral, governing, and organizational roles. These three aspects of a party create a coherent system that (sometimes loosely, sometimes more tightly) provides a degree of integration to the diverse workings of any one political party.

When Sorauf first wrote, the three pieces were rather loosely integrated. Partisanship in the public, for example, was nearly as strongly held as today, but the party in government was deeply divided, especially the Democrats (into North and South, or pro- and anti-civil rights) but also the Republicans (into “Wall Street” and “Main Street,” or urban vs. suburban, small town, and rural). Today, partisanship is as strong as always, but Democratic officeholders are much more strongly united, and Republicans are, if anything, even more so. In addition, the party organizations are stronger and more effective

¹Frank Sorauf passed away September 6, 2013, just as this edition was being written. We miss him.

²Frank J. Sorauf, *Party and Representation, Legislative Politics in Pennsylvania* (New York: Atherton Press, 1963).

(and vastly better financed), making them able to hold together the other two parts. However, even with a highly polarized party system (as this homogeneity among fellow partisans and differentiation from the opposition is called), there are serious strains among the various parts. What, for example, would you do if you were an adviser to the Republican Party faced with the following choice? There is a policy stance that will help your presidential nominee win votes from undecided (typically moderate) voters and thus perhaps help your party win the presidency. That same stance, however, will hurt your party's candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives in their fund-raising campaigns and thus put at risk the narrow majority they currently hold in the House. Is it more important to hold a majority in the House or to hold the presidency? Should you risk losing potential support from moderate voters to maintain close ties with more extreme groups key to your organizational strength in fund-raising?

The second continuity is that Sorauf, Beck, and Hershey see the two major political parties in the United States as a system. The two-party system has long played a central role in the historical evolution of American politics (see especially Chapter 7). Although this two-party system has important implications for the dynamics of American politics, they also see the two-party system as a part of the intermediary groups in society. By this, the authors mean that the parties serve as points of contact between the public and its government (see Figure 1.1, a figure that I believe has graced this book for fifteen editions now).

The third continuity is that each author is a terrific scholar of political parties, and although these continuities have allowed this book to keep its unique intellectual stamp, the transition among authors has also allowed each to bring to the work his or her particular strengths. In the end, this has made the sixteenth edition of the book richer and stronger than ever before. As I noted earlier, Frank Sorauf used his expertise to explain the role of the political party in government. Since then, he became one of the nation's leading experts on the role of money in politics and in later editions reflected that increasingly important but perennially controversial subject.³ Paul Beck brought a distinguished career of scholarship, examining the role of political parties in the electorate and adding nicely to Frank's expertise about the governing role.⁴ Paul is, like Frank and Marjorie Hershey, an expert on American politics. However, Paul is also, more than most of us who study American politics, genuinely knowledgeable about comparative politics.

Marjorie Randon Hershey, through her expertise, has made important contributions to one of the most difficult questions to study: How do candidates and their campaigns shape and how are they shaped by electoral forces?⁵ This

³See, for example, Frank J. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman/Little, Brown College Division, 1988) or *Inside Campaign Finance: Myths and Realities* (New York: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁴He has written a great deal on this subject. One illustration that has long been one of my favorites is his "A Socialization Theory of Partisan Alignment," which was originally published in *The Politics of Future Citizens*, edited by Richard Niemi (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1974, pp. 199–219) and reprinted in *Classics in Voting Behavior*, edited by Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisberg (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1992).

⁵See especially her books, *Running for Office: The Political Education of Campaigners*. (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1984) and *The Making of Campaign Strategy* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath-Lexington, 1974).

interaction links the two most important components of the party, elections and governance, into a more coherent whole. It has allowed her to bring clarity to what has become an increasingly confused portion of the field. Marjorie also has closely studied the role of gender in politics, a dimension of party politics that not only has been of long-standing importance from at least the granting of women's suffrage but has also become especially critical with the emergence and growth of the "gender gap."⁶ Finally, she has made a long series of contributions to help us understand how to bring meaning to complex events.⁷ One special feature of this book is the increased use of narratives from well-known and little-known party figures alike, narratives that serve to bring the subject matter to life.

Not only does each author add a unique and innovative understanding to political parties as they join the continuity of leading scholars who have shaped this book, but also each edition adds new life to the text by considering the politics of the time. This sixteenth edition is not an exception. Here then are some of the facets of particular relevance to contemporary politics that I find particularly worth considering (by you that is).

One issue that is critical to all who study American politics is the way that an understanding of politics matters in your life. This is your government, and the political parties are ways in which you can help shape what your government and elected officials do. This is one of the most important meanings of American political parties. They, and the government that they create, are the consequences of you and your political actions. So saying allows me to move more directly to the longer answer about the study of political parties themselves.

At the outset, I mentioned that you should want to study political parties because they are so important to virtually everything that happens in American politics and because political parties are so central to the workings of any democracy. Great, but you are probably asking, "So what questions should I keep in mind as I read this book? What questions will help me understand the material better?" Let me propose as guidelines three questions that are neither too specific nor too general. We are looking, that is, for questions somewhere in between "Are parties good?" on the one hand and "Why did the Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Republican, Kentucky) say about the Senate term after the 2008 elections, 'The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president,'"⁸ on the other.

You are well aware that today politicians can appear magnanimous and statesmanlike if they say that they will be nonpartisan and if they call for

⁶An especially interesting account of the ways the political parties reacted to female suffrage can be found in Anna L. Harvey, *Votes Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics 1920–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷See, for example, "Constructing Explanations for the U.S. State Governors' Races: The Abortion Issue and the 1990 Gubernatorial Elections," *Political Communication* 17 (July–September 2000): 239–262; "The Meaning of a Mandate: Interpretations of 'Mandate' in 1984 Presidential Election Coverage," *Polity* (Winter 1995): 225–254; and "Support for Political Women: Sex Roles," in John C. Pierce and John L. Sullivan, eds., *The Electorate Reconsidered* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980), pp. 179–198.

⁸<http://nationaljournal.com/member/magazine/top-gop-priority-make-obama-a-one-term-president-20101023> (accessed November 29, 2011).

Congress to “rise above” partisan politics to be bipartisan. Yet essentially every elected official is a partisan, and essentially every elected official chooses to act in a partisan way much of the time. Why do politicians today, you might ask, speak as if they are of two minds about political parties? Perhaps they actually are. Even if you dismiss this rhetoric as just words, it is the case that the public is of two minds about parties, too. This book, like virtually all written about American political parties, includes quotes from the Founding Fathers warning about the dangers of party and faction, often quoting such luminaries as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Yet these very same men not only worried about the dangers of party but they were the founders and leaders of our first political parties. So the first question is “why are people—leaders and followers, founders and contemporary figures alike— both attracted to and repulsed by political parties?”

Let me suggest two books that might give you additional ways to think about this question. One is Richard Hofstadter’s *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). This book is a series of public lectures that Hofstadter gave in which he roots political parties deeply in the American democratic tradition, arguing that they represent the outward manifestation of a change in philosophic understanding of the relationship between citizens and leaders in this, the world’s first practicing democracy. Austin Ranney, in *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction: Party Reform in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), connects Hofstadter’s view of the role of philosophic ideas and American democratic practice from our first 60 years to the contemporary era. Ranney was a leading scholar of political parties, but in this case he was also writing this book in reflection upon his time spent as a member of the so-called McGovern-Fraser Reform Commission, which revised the rules for the Democratic Party and advocated the reforms that led to the current presidential primary system. Thus, there is both a theoretical and practical dimension to this work.

This question of the purpose of parties in our democracy, both theoretical and practical, leads easily to a second major question that should be in your mind as you work through this book and your course: “How does the individual connect to the political party?” There are two aspects to this question. One is fairly direct—what do parties mean to the individual and how, if at all, has this changed over time? The great work that laid out this relationship in the modern era is *The American Voter* by Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960). Many argue that this connection has changed fundamentally. At one extreme, Martin P. Wattenberg has written about the declining relevance of political parties to the voter, such as in his *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952–1996* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), using such striking evidence as a dramatic decline in the willingness or ability of citizens to say what they like or dislike about either of our two major political parties. Others disagree with Wattenberg. Larry Bartels, and in a completely different way, Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, for example, have shown that partisanship

remains as influential in shaping the vote as ever.⁹ It is certainly the case that today we hear people say, “The government, they ...,” and not “The government, we” I suspect that few of us think that way. It is certainly common to hear politicians call for a tax cut by claiming that doing so will give the people back their money. Such a statement would not make sense if we thought of the government as being composed of us, ourselves, and thus thought of our taxes as using our money to work in our government, doing our bidding by enacting our preferences into legislation selected by our representatives whom we chose. The question can, however, be cast even more broadly, asking whether the people feel removed from social, cultural, economic, and political institutions, generally, with political parties and the government therefore only one more symptom of a larger ill. This is certainly a part of the concerns that motivated Robert D. Putnam in his *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). Today that sometimes comes out in the sense that the debate among the politicians in Washington seems to be more about scoring points over the partisan opposition and less about working in the public’s interest. This sense of remove peaked the summer of 2011 in the debate over whether to raise the debt ceiling, in which the elected figures in each party appeared to put the country’s economic recovery at risk merely to win their side of a policy dispute.¹⁰

The change from a trusting, supportive, identified public to one apparently dramatically less so is one of the great changes that took place in American politics over the past half century. A second great change is “polarization,” a growing distance between the elected officials of the two parties. That is, compared with 50 years ago, today the Democrats are more liberal and consistently more so than Republicans, who in turn are much more conservative. Although this is not to say that there is anything close to an identical set of beliefs by the members of either party, there is a greater coherence of opinion and belief in, say, the congressional delegations of each party than in earlier times. Even more undeniable is a much clearer divergence between the policy interests and choices of the two parties in Washington than, say, 50 years ago. You might refer to *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2000), edited by Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, for a variety of fairly early indications of this fact. The question then is not whether there is greater polarization today; the question is whether this relative clarity of polarization matters. As usual, there are at least two ways to understand the question. One is simply to ask whether a more polarized Congress yields policies very different from a less polarized one. The readings in Bond and Fleisher generally support that position. Others, for example, Keith Krehbiel and David W. Brady and Craig Volden argue that the Founders’

⁹Larry M. Bartels, “Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996,” *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2000) 35–50. Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

¹⁰See the discussion of poll reports in the height of the debate over this concern (July 14, 2011) at <http://people-press.org/2011/07/14/the-debt-ceiling-show-down-%E2%80%93-where-the-public-stands> (accessed November 29, 2011).

creation of checks and balances makes polarization relatively ineffectual in shaping legislation due to vetoes, compromises necessary between the two chambers, and so on.¹¹ Even more generally, however, David R. Mayhew has argued that our system generates important legislation regardless of which party is in control or whether they share power under divided partisan control of government.¹² As you might expect, there has been considerable interest in the challenge that Mayhew, Krehbiel, and Brady and Volden have raised. One set of responses can be seen in the Bond and Fleisher volume, another can be found in *The Macro Polity*.¹³

However, this returns us to one of the original questions: Just how closely does the party in the electorate align with the party in government? On this, too, there is considerable disagreement. On the one hand, Alan Abramowitz argues that the partisan public follows only at a degree of lag the polarization of the partisan elite in Washington, while on the other hand, Morris Fiorina argues that the public remains primarily, even overwhelmingly, moderate, and sees the polarization in Washington, but does not follow it. There is, in his words, a “disconnect,” presumably caused by political parties and their leaders.¹⁴ And this, of course connects to politics today – the 2013 government “shutdown,” the controversy over the Affordable Care Act (aka “Obamacare”) and the triggering of the “nuclear option” of ending the requirement of a super-majority vote to end Senate filibusters on non-Supreme Court nominations. And, how well will “Tea Party” candidates do in Republican congressional primary campaigns and then in congressional general election campaigns in 2014? Will the new voter identification laws serve to reduce fraudulent voting or reduce, instead, voter turnout by minorities, young people, and the elderly?

As you can see, we have now reached the point of very recently published work and very recent political occurrences. That is, we are asking questions that are motivating the work of scholars today and problems that are motivating the public and its leaders today. So, let’s get on with it and turn to the book and the study of political parties themselves.

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¹¹Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); David W. Brady and Craig Volden, *Revolving Gridlock: Politics and Policy from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006).

¹²David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking and Investigations, 1946-1990* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and *Partisan Balance: Why Political Parties Don't Kill the U.S. Constitutional System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹³Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson, *The Macro Polity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁴Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization and American Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Morris P. Fiorina, *Culture War: The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3rd ed., with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope (New York: Longman, 2011) and *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics* with Samuel J. Abrams (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

PREFACE

Algebra books probably don't need new editions every two years. Neither do Spanish texts. Languages and math don't usually change that fast.

American politics is different, for better or for worse. The last edition of this book followed the 2010 midterm elections. Reporters heralded a historic Republican victory in 2010. Democratic candidates had been defeated in droves. Literally dozens of ambitious Republicans were planning campaigns to make Barack Obama a one-term president. Bloggers wrote with awe about Tea Party power. Bills to outlaw same-sex marriage were being introduced into state legislatures throughout the nation, with high expectations of passage.

Just two years later, the historic Republican victory was no more. After Obama's reelection, an official Republican study committee delivered an "autopsy" on the party's current standing, acknowledging that voters saw the party as narrow minded, out of touch and "stuffy old white men." Without appealing to a broader range of Americans, the report predicted, "it will be increasingly difficult for Republicans to win another presidential election in the near future." The Tea Party was one of the groups blamed for Republican losses, and a majority of Americans expressed support for gay marriage. Then in 2013, both parties' approval tanked with the government shutdown, and Democrats suffered from the failures of the "Obamacare" Web site. Change is the new constant in American politics, and even a two-year gap in textbook coverage can leave a big hole in students' understanding.

New to This Edition

The new sixteenth edition completely updates every chapter. It offers thorough coverage of the 2012 elections and the early moves in the 2014 race. Other updates and changes include:

- The Republicans' responses to their defeats in 2012: the conundrum of trying to appeal to the growing numbers of Latino Americans and young voters without alienating the party's Tea Party base
- Discussion of the sophisticated new campaign technologies used in 2012, including the use of Big Data by the Obama campaign (in Chapter 11)
- Updates on the activities of super PACs, the impact of *Citizens United*, and the increasing ability of non-party groups to hide the sources of their funds from public disclosure (in Chapter 12)
- Evidence of the decline in swing congressional districts. Recent highly competitive national elections have been built on the backs of increasingly safe House districts (see Chapter 2)
- New information in Chapter 5 on inequalities of wealth and education between political activists and other citizens
- Updates on Voter ID laws in Chapter 8 as well as other efforts by the parties to influence the composition of the electorate

- A more user-friendly approach to the discussion of campaign finance in Chapter 12
- This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about Pearson’s programs, pricing options and customization, visit www.pearsonhighered.com

This book is constantly being updated, but its aims remain the same. Frank J. Sorauf, a pioneer of modern political science, had the vision to create *Party Politics in America* in 1968, and Paul Allen Beck brought the book into the late 1980s and 1990s, with the intellectual mastery and comparative perspective that has marked his research on parties and voting behavior. Their goal for each new edition was to provide students with the clearest, most comprehensive and engaging understanding of political parties and partisanship, which in turn are key to understanding the workings of elections, public opinion, policy making, and leadership. They succeeded so well that *Party Politics in America* has long been known as the “gold standard” of political parties texts.

This edition contains new and updated versions of the features that were so well received in recent editions. The boxes titled “A Day in the Life” tell the personal stories of individuals whose experiences help to illustrate recent changes in the parties. Many of my students see political parties as remote, abstract, and a bit underhanded—something that might interest elderly people, but not teens and twenty-somethings. I hope these compelling stories—for instance, that of a university student traveling to another state and recruiting volunteers into an exciting, nonstop campaign operation—can show readers why studying party politics is worth their time.

In other chapters, the feature titled “Which Would You Choose?” presents students with major debates about party politics: for example, whether encouraging greater voter turnout would help or harm American democracy (see Chapter 8). These summaries, using the point-counterpoint format with which undergraduates are familiar, can serve as the basis for classroom debate on these and many other fundamental concerns.

As in previous editions, I’ve tried to make the reader’s job easier by putting important terms in boldface and clearly defining them, emphasizing the central points even more, and making some of the long tables into figures or shorter, clearer tables. In addition, for instructors, I have made sure that each chapter can stand alone, so that teachers can assign chapters in any order they choose without leaving their students puzzled because relevant concepts were explained elsewhere.

Textbooks have constituents, just as political parties and elected officials do. As elected officials know, good representatives need detailed information about what their constituents want—in this case, what readers like and don’t like about a book. I’ve really appreciated the reactions I’ve received from some faculty members and students who have read *Party Politics in America*, but I would like to receive many more. How about you? You can reach me at hershey@indiana.edu; I’ll be happy to respond.

Acknowledgments and Thanks

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Political scientists who reviewed the previous edition—Craig Brians of Virginia Tech, David Darmofal of the University of South Carolina–Columbia, Scott McClurg of Southern Illinois University, and John McGlennon of the College of William and Mary—were very generous with their suggestions. They and other reviewers over time have helped immeasurably in my effort to adapt the book to students' and instructors' changing needs. And it remains a pleasure to work with the people at Pearson: Editor Melissa Mashburn, editorial assistants Megan Hermida and Courtney Turcotte, and the other members of the production team.

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Marjorie Randon Hershey