It's the System, Stupid!

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Perhaps the most quixotic actors in the ethical dimensions of election campaigns are political parties. In this chapter, I argue that political parties do behave ethically in election campaigns, but that the structure of electoral competition the parties have created is itself unethical because it denies access to anyone outside the two major American political parties. These parties ensure the maintenance of the political system that favors them by manipulating laws and customs of the democratic process at the expense of the participation of other possible competitors. However, most observers of American election campaigns would not come to this conclusion because the role of political parties in elections seems confusing. We have no consensus on whom the parties truly represent in the system, and the debate about that distracts us from the system's underlying unfairness.

In chapter 2, Miller and Medvic explain that ethical norms, as opposed to morals, are meant to judge and constrain the behavior of agents on behalf of their principals. In the case of political consultants (the example they use), it is clear that the client (for example, a candidate, interest group, or political party) is the principal and the consultant is the agent. But when we talk about the ethical dimensions of political party activity, precisely what principal-agent relationship do we mean?

Principal-agent theories have normally been applied to the legislative or bureaucratic arenas of American politics because the givers of power (principals) to the leaders or agencies who exercise it (agents) are readily identifiable. While we know that political parties act as agents in the electoral process, a classic problem in political party research is agreeing on the proper specification for the principal. Is the party an agent for the voters who identify with a party, for the activists who carry out its work (by volunteering or working as paid employees for a party organization at any level of government), or for the candidates (both incumbents and challengers)? Clearly, one of the biggest problems in assessing the ethics of political parties is determining who their principal is. If we cannot make this determination, then proceeding with our discussion is problematic, for to say that the party is an agent for all these principals is to concede that parties cannot engage in consistently ethical behavior at all (or achieve meaningful results, for that matter) because the demands of the principals compete.

It is the confusion over principal-agent relationships that leads many political scientists and political pundits to claim that parties are less relevant now than they once were in elections. This argument conjures up images of the “golden age” of parties, a time before the Progressive Era when political parties had tight control over their nominees and issue positions, making them an agent for only the electorate. Candidates were thought to be the agents for the parties, not the other way around. Many scholars argue that around the 1960s, the entire electoral process became centered around candidates, not parties, making the parties agents for candidates as well as for voters.

Contrary to this school of thought, I agree with Katz and Mair that political parties are in fact agents for the state, and in this role they determine the background for how elections are waged in the United States. Katz and Mair’s theory of the “cartel party” describes a system wherein political parties no longer have a role as straight intermediaries between civil society and the state but are in fact embedded in the state. They make some stark claims about the implications of the cartel party for democratic thought:

Democracy ceases to be seen as a process by which limitations or controls are imposed on the state by civil society, becoming instead a service provided by the state for civil society. ... Feedback is necessary if rulers are to provide government that is broadly acceptable, and contested elections, which signal public pleasure (or displeasure) with policy and outcomes, provide that feedback. Thus,
the state provides contested elections. And since democratically contested elections, at least as currently understood, require political parties, the state also provides (or guarantees the provision of) political parties. In the end, of course, it is the parties in power that are the state and that provide this service, and it is thus their own existence that they are guaranteeing.5

When put in this way, the question of the campaign ethics of political parties cannot be asked solely in the context of tactics employed in particular elections. Instead, we must ask if the entire system of electoral competition created by the political parties as agents of the state is consistent with our conception of democracy, and if it is not, whether the two parties' domination of electoral politics in the United States is itself ethical.

The central problem in making this case is that most Americans would not acknowledge either the central role of parties in elections or the existence of a cartel between the two major parties. Because party identification has low salience for voters, and because voters claim they vote for the candidate, not the party, we attribute ethics in campaigns to individual candidates and their "handlers," political consultants.6 However, it is difficult to deny that elected officials of the two major parties are the ones who determine how nominations are made, how campaigns are financed, how ballots are created and administered, and how electoral disputes are settled—all clear foundations for how the "state" operates.

Leon Epstein argued that the fifty states view the role of political parties in elections as they would public utilities in other aspects of public policy. Party functions became regulated by the states in the same way that the electric and gas companies were.7 One of the distinguishing characteristics of all public utilities is that they are monopolies. Thus, although some might argue that American political parties, like many public utilities today, are really private associations subject to governmental regulation, I would argue that political parties do not qualify as private organizations. Unlike water, gas, and electricity, which must be provided centrally in order for the public to be safe, and therefore must be provided by a state-run entity or a private entity tightly controlled by the state, democracy in America can exist without a duopolistic party system. The idea that only Democrats and Republicans can maintain control of any elected body in the United States (at the national, state, and the vast majority of local levels) and the fact that regulatory bodies for elections exist in every one of the fifty states and perform virtually identical functions should show that the broad concept of the "state" in the United States has become intertwined with the two major parties.

American political parties form a cartel and they act as an agent for the "state." Political parties are questioned for their ethics in elections not because parties are doing anything extraordinarily corrupt, but because the consumers of party goods (the various principals) have conflicting expectations of them and fundamentally, they all fail to see that the state is the true principal. For this reason, it is difficult to indict political parties as acting under the "self-interested" school of ethics rather than the "civic responsibility" school outlined by Miller and Medvic in chapter 2. Though Miller and Medvic acknowledge that defining the public good makes the "civic responsibility" school difficult to achieve, we can say that if the parties are agents for the "state" and if preserving democracy/civic responsibility/public good are all dimensions of the responsibility of the "state," then the parties have an enormous role in determining the acceptable limits of campaign activity. The recognition that the state, rather than the voters, activists, or candidates, is the true principal of political parties should lead to the understanding that in order to change the behavior of the political parties in elections, one would have to change the very structure of the political system itself. In other words, in the current system, parties are acting as ethically as they must, and their actions are constrained only by the context in which they are operating—which they themselves define.

**Political Party Paradoxes**

Borrowing from a device Thomas Cronin used to explain contradictory expectations Americans have of the presidency, I have developed a series of paradoxes to examine the degree of ethical behavior shown by political parties in elections.8 These paradoxes identify some familiar charges against the ethics of political parties (such as in the area of campaign finance) and some less familiar (as in the restriction of multiparty competition). In each paradox, the puzzle for assessing political party ethics lies in the confusion over which principal the party serves. The paradoxes demonstrate that political party behavior that appears to favor one principal is deemed unethical or improper by the others. That no true solution is found for these paradoxes is further evidence that the true principal for American political parties is the state.
Paradox 1

In the United States, it is generally agreed that we should have a free and open political system where anyone should be able to run for election to public office. However, candidates should have a good chance of winning, and so the number of candidates on the ballot must be small so voters are not confused and the system is "orderly."

It is a well-established "fact" that anyone can run for public office in the United States as long as he or she meets the legal requirements of citizenship, residency, and age. It is equally well established that candidates who expect to get elected run for public office as either a Democrat or a Republican. As Herrnson and Green and Lowi and Romance show, the two-party system in the United States has many supports. While some are assuredly cultural (the belief that two parties are "natural" in a democracy), some are legal or institutional barriers to minor-party access. For example, each state regulates how parties obtain and retain ballot position. The two major parties have privileged access to the ballot, meaning that as long as their candidate for a flagship office (usually governor) receives a relatively high percentage of the vote (20 percent) in the previous general election, they do not have to reapply for status as a political party, while newly formed political parties face considerable obstacles from state election bureaucracies and state and federal courts in their efforts to obtain and retain ballot access. Therefore, serious contenders for public office will run in the primaries of the two major parties. This ensures the dominance of Democrats and Republicans in American elections.

As Katz and Mair have argued, the perpetual opposition party (also a cartel party) is acceptable to the party in power. What is not acceptable is the idea that an upset party such as the Reform Party or the Green Party could gain access to office and succeed in changing the rules of the established game or that such a party's success would force a major party to change its rules and leave the cartel. The result of two-party dominance is a homogenization of candidate types, issue stances, and campaign appeals. Consequently, qualified candidates for office who decide not to call themselves Democrats or Republicans must first get over the "sideshow" factor of their candidacies before the electorate will even consider them.

So, while Representative Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.), a socialist, has worked hard not to be called a Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives, his efforts have been treated dismissively. He is officially referred to as an

Independent in the House, and his struggles with former Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.) to retain his committee assignments without pledging allegiance to the Democratic Party in the early 1990s have taken on legendary status. Additionally, Ralph Nader's pursuit of 5 percent of the popular vote in the 2000 presidential election was ridiculed as much for his audacity at pointing out that the two major party candidates were essentially similar on issues of great importance as for his "spoiling" the election for Al Gore.

The important point is that political parties have not done anything illegal in terms of violating the existing laws regulating party competition; instead, the parties—through their elected officials—have written laws designed to constrain competition that are inherently unethical with respect to the general principles of democracy. If the state favors stability, democratic principles (a small "d"), capitalism, and predictability, then creating barriers for the Democratic and Republican Parties makes a great deal of sense. Creating a system that discourages new parties and encourages increased primary competition forces candidates with a good chance of winning to essentially accept the "legitimate" aura of a major party nomination, which in itself constrains them. In essence, the parties have defined party competition and fair electoral practices to mean that whatever the Democrats and Republicans have traditionally done is ethical, and anything outside the mainstream is not. Thus while Democrats and Republicans have nearly identical systems for nominating presidential candidates, the presidential nominating practices of the Greens and the Reform Party are ridiculed. Neutral monitors of election practices (the Federal Election Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Commission on Presidential Debates) are hailed for their nonpartisan status, while in fact the individuals who run the commissions are affiliated with one of the two major parties (though the evenness in their division is meant to convince us that one party is not favored over the other—but the point is that the two-party system is favored in all instances). These organizations may be bipartisan, but they certainly are not nonpartisan.

The two major parties do seem to referee each other in the arena of campaign finance, where one often finds one party suing the other. However, in cases where the states try to change major party practices, as in the recent challenge to California's blanket primary, the Democrats and Republicans filed a brief together against the state action. Democrats and Republicans frequently decry the other's tactics, only to be found later engaging in similar behavior themselves (the Democrats' recent increase
in soft money fund-raising is only one of a number of examples). Under the guise of pragmatism, neither party unilaterally ceases practices of ethical uncertainty, a point made by Siegel in chapter 8. The two major parties are constantly expanding the definition of ethical practices in campaigns to include most activities one or the other engages in and to exclude many of those engaged in by potential rivals.

Why do voters put up with this? Our single member plurality (SMP) system allows only one winner in a district, and the desire of the voting public to be behind a winner leads them to choose between major-party candidates (the state's agents) rather than from among all parties on the ballot. Thus the paradox stated above forces us to reconcile the idea that our system cannot both promote representation of all individuals' views and encourage only "serious" candidates at the same time. So while some can claim that the exclusion of Ralph Nader from the presidential ticket in some states and from the televised presidential debates is undemocratic, others can claim that voters who ultimately cast their ballots for Nader are responsible for the "illegitimate" election of George W. Bush and are undermining our democracy by casting votes for a candidate who best represents them.

**Paradox 2**

**Political parties are supposed to run coordinated campaigns up and down the ticket and across states based on common themes or ideologies, but at the same time do the best they can to help competitive candidates win elections.**

This paradox finds the candidates and voters squarely at odds with their agent, the parties. Voters say they want political parties to present candidates of consistent ideologies, so that the "brand name" appeal of party affiliation has some meaning for them. Candidates for office include incumbents, competitive candidates, and noncompetitive candidates. The incumbents and competitive candidates see the parties as their agents for getting elected to office and expect a disproportionate amount of resources to be given to them, without regard to their ideologies as long as they are members of the party. This paradox pits voters against candidates. Since the winning candidates become part of the state, the pragmatism of ignoring ideological inconsistencies wins. Since virtually all eligible voters choose either to legitimize the actions of the parties by voting for one of the major parties or not voting at all (as opposed to, say, a civil uprising or supporting a minor party), the unethical behavior of political parties is accepted.

In *Pursuing Majorities* I detail the operations of the congressional campaign committees (CCC's) since the late nineteenth century. I argue that the collective benefits of campaigning on the basis of party affiliation, and not just on personal characteristics, have real rewards, an argument that has been specified by others in other dimensions of political life. Simply put, candidates for office have a logical preference ordering of ambitions. First, they want to be elected. Second, they want to be a member of the majority party. To exercise power, a candidate must win office. To exercise maximal power, the officeholder must be in the majority party that controls the agenda, personnel, committees (in the legislature), and other aspects of power in governments. Senior elected officials have the most to gain by serving in the majority party and are normally the ones for whom the first goal (their own election and reelection) has become relatively easy to secure. These senior members are the ones responsible for the proliferation of political party organizations at the national and state levels (for example, CCC's and legislative campaign committees—LCC's) and for the explosion in political action committees formed by congressional leaders (leadership PAC's).

The problem with this strategy is that it promotes winning (the goal of the candidates) at the cost of everything else. This is a problem not only in the United States but in most places where majority control of the government is sought. In multiparty systems where coalition governments are assumed, the imperative behind pursuing majorities is less urgent. It is more likely, then, that parties stress their issue positions and policy agenda (responding to voters and activists) when their goal is only to be elected to office rather than to control the government, where their positions are normally moderated to please the maximum number of people.

Therefore, in the American party system, we rightly debate whether the two major parties actually differ from each other or whether they are in fact simply vehicles to enable ambitious politicians to achieve their goals. While I will not debate the merits of the considerable literature that argues this point, the real imperative of majority status (especially in recent elections where the control of so many legislative bodies is determined by such a few seats) means that political party leaders simply cannot afford to create hard and fast rules to determine who will wear their party label. One recent example is Vermont senator Jim Jeffords's switch in May 2001
from the Republican Party to an Independent aligned with the Democrats, giving Democrats control of the U.S. Senate chamber.

If the party believes its candidate has a chance to win the seat, then it will feel morally bound to create viable campaign strategies for a pro-choice Republican or pro-business Democrat, even if that is at odds with its activists' or voters' dominant ideology. But is it ethical for the party to abandon its platform, issues, and strongest supporters for pragmatic reasons? The answer to this question depends again on the principal. Some would say (Mark Siegel, for example, in chapter 8 of this volume) that the American political system demands pragmatic responses, and that for the American parties to do anything else would be political suicide. Others would say that putting pragmatism over substance makes American political parties simple electoral machines, not genuine political parties. Indeed, Katz and I have termed American parties "empty vessels" to describe this reality. Ultimately, if the state is the true principal of the American party system, then the triumph of pragmatism over ideology is inevitable, for pragmatism promotes stability and that is what the state values most.

**Paradox 3**

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candidates in the primary, they are expected to promote candidates with the best chance of winning. Because the resources (see below) that candidates need are scarce, the parties do tend to direct resources in a way that will do the most electoral good and will mollify their activist base. This explains why sometimes the parties will shy away from potentially winnable races with candidates who only marginally appeal to their activist core. If parties are agents of the state, then encouraging mainstream candidates by any means is acceptable.

Paradox 4

Parties are supposed to be national and provide services to all candidates, but also be sensitive to individual candidates’ needs, especially regarding locales and personalities.

Following on the previous paradox, American political parties are expected to service all candidates fully, which promotes the ideas of party responsibility and unified campaign themes, and at the same time be cognizant of the local needs of candidates, which is important for winning offices. When the parties endeavor to treat all candidates the same, they invariably receive great criticism from all fronts: The advice is generic and therefore useless; it wastes valuable time for little in return. However, doing the converse stretches the party’s institutional capacity: There are simply too many variables in each district for a relatively small party staff in Washington or the state capitol to service adequately. The limited utility of party support is another factor that frequently leads to charges that we have a “candidate-centered” system.

Pragmatism has again produced an interesting solution for the parties: They provide broad, generic advice and resources directly and provide specialized services indirectly through the hiring of professional political consultants. The money the CCCs are legally allowed to spend on behalf of their candidates is mostly paid to professional political consultants who take only a few clients at a time. The political parties seem to have solved this immediate paradox by subcontracting resource provision to other vendors, but this activity has exposed the parties to other criticisms, especially that the political consultants they hire have replaced parties.

Earlier, I quoted Katz and Mair stating that the state recognizes the need to stage competitive elections. Because the state has managed to create a system that has mostly uncompetitive elections, the parties, media, and voters shower lavish attention and resources on the very few seats that are in contention. Since each major party desires majority status and since true competition is confined to a handful of seats, the parties find ways to give competitive candidates the maximum amount of resources while providing all their candidates with some minimal support. By asking other party agents (such as political consultants, staff members of incumbent officeholders who are technically governmental employees, and interest groups affiliated with the party) to do whatever is needed to win competitive races, parties create a campaign environment that clearly shows that the ends justify the means. Therefore, campaign activities that might be personally unethical for candidates (such as making misleading or false statements or ignoring or ridiculing third-party candidates) are considered marginally ethical for parties because of the importance of majority status and a stable two-party cartel.

Paradox 5

Parties are supposed to raise money for their operations from the private sector but not in excessive amounts. However, the idea of state-financed elections seems inconsistent with American democratic principles.

Campaign finance is certainly the first topic that comes to mind when people put political parties and ethics in the same sentence. Yet conflicting imperatives again make judgments about unethical behavior difficult. The money paradox stated above finds that we generally agree that too much money spent to elect candidates means wealthy contributors have too much influence over those same elected officials, and that there must be a quid pro quo involved. We want to regulate the campaign finance system tightly, but moving to a state-financed system, which would eliminate private money altogether, is never seriously discussed. Why is this the case? Because, we are told, the political parties in Congress cannot come to agreement over minor reforms, much less a wholesale change in the character of the political system. That is exactly the point—a state-funded campaign finance system would change the nature of American electoral competition.

Aside from the conventional institutional barriers that keep new parties out of the system (such as ballot access), privately based campaign finance keeps new parties from becoming effective participants in the electoral process because they will never be able to raise the money they need to be competitive. As agents of the state, the Democratic and Republican Parties do not seriously advocate public funding. One could say that a true cartel should be able to institutionalize public funding for the two major parties. This cannot happen for two reasons. First, the cartel is
founded on a general American notion that the state must be as small as possible and that any expansion is for "nonpolitical" reasons only (such as the creation of Medicare or the nationalization of airport security personnel after September 11, 2001). Thus while it was permissible to expand the number of professional staff for elected officeholders even if these staff members performed some political work, it would not be acceptable to do this for direct party purposes (as some Western European states do). Second, the U.S. Supreme Court consistently finds in favor of First Amendment rights to use money in campaigns as guaranteed free speech, making it likely that a new cartel could emerge among interests opposed to the idea of public funding.

If, then, we find that public financing of elections is not possible, why is better regulation of campaigns not possible? Aside from the above argument that the current system sustains both parties, the suppliers of the funds (despite their faint objections) are willing to continue to invest in the current system. Thomas Ferguson argue: "the fundamental market for political parties usually is not voters...the real market for political parties described by major investors, who generally have good and clear reasons for investing to control the state." Ferguson also says that major investors (specifically those who represent corporate America) are willing to donate to either or both political parties to prevent any substantive tinkering with the nature of the state-supported capitalist system. This explains why every time the parties discover loopholes in campaign finance laws, the "moneyed interests" respond with the requested funds. This has escalated the reasonable cost of competitive campaigns dramatically, guaranteeing that most would-be minor-party participants are deterred from participating. The only exception we have witnessed to the major-party money advantage in elections is H. Ross Perot's failed attempts at a successful candidacy and new party. The individualistic nature of Perot's "billionaire populist" appeals made him a relatively easy target for ridicule by mainstream politicians, contributing to his political demise. Perot's momentary success also helped enforce the myth that the party system is open to challenges, thus discouraging criticism of the party system (including from Perot himself).

Today's campaign finance debates center around the appropriateness of "soft money" and the use of issue advocacy campaigns by both parties and interest groups. Soft money refers to funds raised for party-building purposes instead of direct electioneering costs. Starting with the 1996 elections, political parties began to spend soft money in ways that barely conformed to the spirit of the law. By not using the "magic words" of direct electioneering ("vote for," "vote against," "elect," or "defeat") in advocating for a particular candidate, parties could claim they were informing the public about issues, not candidates. This allowed them, in their view, to use soft money to help pay for these communications. As Siegel points out in the next chapter, a unilateral refusal to engage in unethical behavior would be political suicide, so both parties sponsored soft money-funded issue ads at virtually the same time. Indeed, the loose interpretations of how money may be raised and spent in elections have been pushed by both parties almost equally. But in contrast to Siegel's view, I believe that political party soft money spending does not seem unethical in a system where parties are agents for their candidates—they are bound to do what they must to elect them to office. It does not seem unethical in terms of the voters, as these "issue ads" provide more, not less, issue content than is normally witnessed in campaigns. It does seem problematic in terms of disproportionate influence by monied groups over nonmonied groups (more about that below), but fundamentally, soft money just reinforces Ferguson's argument about investors. If the two major political parties can continue to raise huge sums from wealthy donors, it is the nature of the political system that allows a handful of elites rather than the masses to control the boundaries of political debate that has serious ethical problems, not the political parties that this system produces.

Paradox 6

Parties should be responsive to group concerns but should not court their financial support.

Interest groups also engage in issue advocacy campaigns with funds that do not have to be disclosed to the Federal Election Commission. They can do this because they have successfully argued that it is their First Amendment right to do so. Likewise, interest groups have donated unlimited amounts to political parties in the form of soft money, a concept many in the media find both unethical and objectionable. However, the interest group-political party tension is another paradox. Our parties are supposed to be "big tents," collections of myriad interest groups that reflect the variety of concerns in society at large. Thus political parties are encouraged to be inclusive and in many important ways are described by their constituent groups (for example, Democrats are synonymous with organized labor; Republicans have affinity with corporate America). Political parties are applauded for their affirmative action measures to be
race- and gender-inclusive with delegates to the national conventions, and President George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" is the latest effort to reach out to all groups. If parties are agents for voters, and voters are aligned in groups, then it makes sense for parties to court the favor of groups. Indeed, much of American democratic theory (including the founders' own thinking) is expressed in terms of the importance of group participation. However, issue appeals seem to be one thing: donations of soft money quite another.

Once again, a political system that sanctions the idea that those with more money are entitled to more speech should be blamed for the ethical lapse here, not the parties. *Buckley v. Valeo* put the Constitution on the side of unlimited money in politics. The parties have taken this to be another tool in their arsenal designed to win elections. It seems impossible for parties to embrace groups' ideas and followers without embracing their donations as well.

**Closing Thoughts**

Political parties appear to behave ethically within an unethical system. They have a clear goal: winning elections. They have a variety of strategies to accomplish this, many of which often seem contradictory. They appear to encourage democratic discourse while in fact stifling it in fundamental ways. If the barriers to real party competition were removed (such as the single member plurality system; restrictive state-run ballot access laws; airwave access run by cost, not fairness), the current practices of the Democratic and Republican Parties would change almost instantly. Since they are the parties in power, and their officeholders are the state, then the rules of the game that favor two parties, such as issue-free campaigns, election funding by wealthy interests, and suppressed competition, will remain in force.

In sum, parties have a number of ethical responsibilities and obligations during elections, but what these are depends on who the principal is in the principal-agent relationship. They have different and competing duties if the principal is the state, candidates, or citizens. Therefore, parties both are and are not acting ethically today. When they are not, it is the result of an electoral system that constrains competition. Finally, other electoral actors have a major effect on parties’ ethical actions. Unlike any other actor discussed in this book, parties face competing demands from candidates, citizens, and the state. Additionally, and possibly most impor-

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Consequently, the system in which parties operate goes a long way to create these competing demands on political parties.

**Notes**


2. For how this works with committees in Congress, see Forrest Maltzman, *Competing Principals: Committees, Parties, and the Organization of Congress* (University of Michigan Press, 1997).


5. Ibid., p. 22.

6. However, as Traugott points out in chapter 13 of this volume, party identification is still the best predictor of individuals' vote choice.


11. Herron and Green, *Multiparty Politics in America*.


13. The contention that Nader was a "spoiler" has been variously argued but is impossible to prove. The assumption that Nader voters would have voted for Gore if Nader were not on the ballot is the same argument made for the importance of Perot's candidacy for George Bush in 1992.
14. For example, Federal Election Commission commissioners are political appointees who are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate: "by law, no more than three Commissioners can be members of the same political party" (see Anthony Corrado and others, Campaign Finance Reform: A Sourcebook [Brookings, 1997], pp. 277–80).


16. For a summary of arguments about how the electoral rules in the United States (the SMP rules) foster a two-party system, see Dulio and Thurber, "America's Two-Party System."

17. Aldrich, Why Parties?


19. See also Gary W. Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins, Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House (University of California Press, 1993); Aldrich, Why Parties?


25. The 1998 special election in California’s 22d district is a case in point. The Republican Party’s support of moderate Brooks Firestone allowed eventual nominee Tom Bordanaro to make the claim that "Gingrich was interfering in local political processes" (Jeff Gill, "One Year and Four Elections: The 1998 Capps Campaign for California’s Twenty-Second District," in James A. Thurber, ed., The Battle for Congress: Consultants, Candidates, and Voters [Brookings, 2001]).

26. One case is the 2000 Pennsylvania Senate race where Democrat Ron Klink was unenthusiastically supported by his party even though his opponent, incumbent Senator Rick Santorum, was considered one of the most vulnerable members running for reelection. Klink’s pro-gun and pro-life views made him unattractive to Democratic Party fund-raisers even though his economic issue stances were considered quite progressive.


31. J. P. Monroe, The Political Party Matrix: The Persistence of Organization (State University of New York Press, 2001), details the evolution of district staff at the national, state, and local levels and argues that the state is in effect subsidizing political party work that was previously funded by party organizations in the "golden age."


33. Theodore Lowi’s “conversation” with a Perot representative is something everyone should read to understand this point (Lowi and Romance, A Republic of Parties? pp. 22–30).


37. On March 27, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act into law. The new law forbids national political parties from raising soft money effective after the November 2002 elections. Court challenges regarding the constitutionality of this law were filed immediately.

38. See Thurber in chapter 9 of this volume for more on this point.