

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**POSC 105
INTEREST GROUP POLITICS**

- I. THIS MORNING:
 - A. Summary of primaries
 - B. Money and politics
 - C. Interest groups

- II. SUMMARY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF PRIMARIES:
 - A. They are not as democratic as one might suppose because small groups of well organized individuals can propel a candidate to the top and hence the nomination in spite of public preferences.
 - B. Frequently and more and more the nomination process produces candidates who are good at getting elected but not necessarily good at governing.
 - 1. Getting some done in our constitutional system is hard enough even for those with lots of political skills and experience.
 - 2. As often as not the system eats up outsiders like Carter, Clinton.
 - C. Primaries weaken parties because they allow “outsiders” or “mavericks” to circumvent or go around the established party organization.
 - 1. Hence party leaders can’t control nominees.
 - 2. If leaders can’t control nominees, then party can produce a platform that will be supported.
 - 3. The long and short is that we have dozens and dozens and dozens of parties, each headed by a “feudal lord.” How can citizens hold them and the system accountable?

- III. MONEY AND POLITICS:
 - A. Reprinted from the last set of notes
 - B. Some background
 - 1. Watergate and reform
 - 2. What the laws did or tried to do
 - a. Federal Election Commission (FEC)
 - b. Disclosure
 - c. Limits on spending
 - * Now applies to presidential candidates who accept public contributions.
 - * Other candidates can spend what they want. See below.
 - d. Public financing: goes only to presidential candidates for nomination and regular (general) election expenditures.

- * Candidates agree to spending limits
 - * But they are not bound to accept contributions and have many ways of raising additional funds. See below.
 - * Efforts to extend it to congressional elections have failed.
 - e. **Political action committees:** organizations that solicit contributions from members and others and distributes to candidates
 - C. Recent developments
 1. ***Buckley v. Valeo***: the “money talks decision”
 - a. The decision effectively equates freedom of speech and spending on one’s behalf.
 2. "Soft money": contributions ostensibly made to parties for purposes such as "get-out-the-vote" drives, but in actuality support candidates at all levels.
 - a. The recent controversy surrounding Clinton’s re-election fund raising activities largely involve soft money issues.
 3. Independent committees and generic (issue advocacy) ads
 - D. Results: reforms have inadvertently encouraged or at least not prevented
 1. Flow of money into campaigns
 2. Weakening of parties, increasing strength of interest groups.
- IV. FILM:
- A. A short (10 minute) clip, “The Money Trail,” illustrates some of these points and makes the connection to interest groups.
- V. INTEREST GROUP POLITICS:
- A. From the last set of notes.
 - B. To understand American government, especially the “middle levels” one needs to appreciate the central role interest groups play in the political process.
 - C. Interest groups compared to political parties:
 1. Do not try to run government **as a whole**, only to protect the interests of their members.
 2. **Private**, not public, bodies and hence not accountable in the same way parties are.
 3. Do not run their own candidates for office.
 - D. The American way of politics: interest group conflict
 1. The belief in the legitimacy of groups: ours is a nation that places great value on interest groups.
 2. Main “actors” or players are organized groups.
 3. Usually, several sets of groups on each side of an issue.
 4. Groups struggle in many arenas for favorable outcomes, decisions.
 5. Groups **participate** in policy development and especially implementation.

6. Tools: contact and access and favors (lobbying), public relations, “knowledge,” election contributions
7. On paper the “system” remain relatively stable, “balanced,” open, representative.
8. But there are also disadvantages.

VI. NEXT TIME:

- A. How interest groups affect decision making, especially in Congress
- B. Reading:
 1. Patterson, *We the People* as noted in the last notes.
 2. *Debt and Deficits*: try to understand.

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