

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Posc 105

POLITICAL PARTIES AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

I. THIS MORNING:

- A. Why the party system is decentralized
- B. Money and politics
 - 1. Discussion of the effects of campaign finance reform on parties
 - 2. Film that illustrates these points: “Washington’s Other Scandal.”

II. RECAP - EXPLANATIONS OF PARTY WEAKNESS:

- A. Reprinted from yesterday’s notes
- B. Constitutional system, especially federalism and independently elected legislative members, creates numerous power centers.
 - 1. Separate constituencies
- C. Candidate-centered campaigns: candidates (e.g., senators and representatives) have their own sources of support and power and do not rely on the central party organization.
 - 1. I mentioned Biden yesterday.
- D. General-welfare liberalism: distrust of parties and party bosses.
 - 1. Perot's 1992 candidacy and Colin Powell are examples of reaction against politics as usual.
 - 2. The same can be said of term limits.
- E. Recent trends in party development:
 - 1. Increasing importance of primaries over conventions and caucuses in the nomination process
 - 2. Television gives candidates independent "access" to voters.
 - a. Party leaders are “circumvented”
 - b. And it increases costs of running for office
 - 3. Campaign finance reform during the 1970s strengthened interest groups
 - a. Perhaps surprisingly, campaign finance reforms have (in my view) further weakened parties.

III. CAMPAIGN FINANCES:

- A. Largely reprinted from yesterday’s notes.
- B. The Watergate reforms.
 - 1. Disclosure
 - a. As an example, you can track big “givers” in the states by going here: http://www.tray.com/fecinfo/98bg_st.htm.

- (1) Click on a state, then look at the donors.
 - (2) In Delaware, for example, something called “DLO Corp” is the biggest “soft money” (see below) contributor.
 - (3) Click on **here** at the top of the page and then enter “DLO” in the box “Go Search.”
 - (4) You’ll be taken to a list of recipients of DLO contributions.
 - (5) Why not click on **Image** under the first and go to the actual page that lists the amount DLO gave.
 - (i.) This page also has a menu. If you go to the first page, you’ll see that this organization is called “Republican House-Senate Dinner” committee.
 - (ii.) If you look around you’ll see that this committee raised quite a bit of money from quite a few corporations and individuals.
 - (6) **Spend half an hour here: it quite an experience!!!**
2. Limits on spending
3. Caps on contributions
4. Public financing of presidential elections.
5. Political action committees (PACs):
 - a. Organizations that solicit contributions from members and others and distributes to candidates
 - b. For a graph that shows the explosion in PACs go to <http://www.fec.gov/press/pacnum.jpg>.
6. Federal Election Commission (FEC).
7. Web site that explains rules and regulations: <http://www.fec.gov/pages/citnlist.htm>.
- C. Some unintended consequences
 1. **Political Action Committees** (PACs)
 - a. Some very important points:
 - (1) Incumbents main beneficiaries
 - (2) Contributions to House members favored Democrats until 1994 and now are about 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats. WHY?
 - b. Go here for some very simple but important numbers: <http://www.fec.gov/press/pacye96.htm>.
 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. For a table that shows who gives and who receives soft money go to: http://206.239.183.87/crp_softmoney1.htm.
 - b. A similar page is at: <http://www.tray.com/fecinfo/smrpt.htm>.
 3. Spending limits and **Buckley vs Valeo**
 - a. The “money talks” decision

- b. Wealth cannot be denied.
 - D. The effect of reforms has been to weaken parties by giving group greater access through funding opportunities.
 - 1. To appreciate the point go here to explore campaign contribution data:
<http://www.tray.com/fecinfo/>.
 - E. The strength of interest groups and now their PACS.
 - F. All of these developments conspire to weaken parties and strengthen both individuals and interest groups.
- IV. NEXT TIME:
- A. Interest groups and politics