

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
Posc 150**

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

- I. CONTENTS:
 - A. Remarks on why party system in America is structured as it is.
 - B. Campaigns, money, and parties.

 - II. PARTIES IN THE GOVERNMENT:
 - A. Reprinted
 - B. In spite of weaknesses, parties organize Congress and are thus important.
 - 1. Congressional organization:
 - i. Committees and subcommittees.
 - ii. Staff
 - iii. Agenda
 - iv. Rules committee in the House
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- III. EXPLANATIONS FOR FORM AND WEAKNESSES:
 - A. Reprinted
 - B. Nomination process
 - 1. Increasing importance of primaries over conventions and caucuses in the nomination process
 - C. Constitutional system, especially federalism and independently elected legislative members, creates numerous power centers.
 - 1. Separate constituencies
 - D. Campaign strategies
 - 1. 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.
 - i. Examples:
 - 1) ✓Democratic presidential candidates: George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Michael Dukakis, Bill Clinton
 - 2) ✓1992 Republican presidential primaries and Patrick Buchanan.
 - E. General distrust of parties and party bosses.
 - 1. ✓In 2000 former Senator Bill Bradley's and Senator John McCain ran against the "establishment" and politics as usual.
 - 2. ✓Jesse Ventura.
 - 3. ✓Popularity of term limits reflects distrust of parties and party politics.
 - F. Recent trends in party development:
 - 1. Television gives candidates independent "access" to voters.
 - i. Party leaders are "circumvented"

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- ii. And it increases costs of running for office
 - 2. Campaign finance reform during the 1970s strengthened interest groups
 - i. Perhaps surprisingly, campaign finance reforms have (in my view) further weakened parties.

IV. CAMPAIGN FINANCES:

- A. The Watergate reforms.
 - 1. Scandals in the Nixon administration.
 - i. Illegal contributions.
 - ii. Dirty tricks
 - 2. The 1970s reforms:
 - i. General: for general finance laws see: http://www.fec.gov/finance_law.html
 - ii. ○Disclosure
 - 1) As an example, you can track “big” givers by going here <http://www.tray.com/fecinfo/>
 - 2) Disclosure was the centerpiece of Bush’s campaign reform proposal.
 - a) You can research his contributors at the same site.
 - iii. ○Limits on spending
 - iv. ○Caps on contributions
 - 1) \$1,000 for individual per election (and primary) per year
 - v. ○Public financing of *presidential* campaigns.
 - 1) Only presidential elections financed.
 - vi. *Political action committees (PACs):
 - 1) Organizations that solicit contributions from members and others and distributes to candidates
 - 2) An aside: You can find links to political advocacy or interest groups in the course web page by going to “For Your Information” and then “Interest Groups.”
 - 3) For a report on PACs go to the Federal Election Committee site: http://www.fec.gov/finance_reports.html
 - vii. Federal Election Commission (FEC).
 - 1) Overview: <http://www.fec.gov/pages/fecfeca.htm>

V. LOOPHOLES:

- A. *Soft money
 - 1. Parties, particularly local parties, can raise and spend as much money on party building activities as they want.
 - i. These activities were meant to include activities such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives.
 - ii. They were not to be conducted on behalf of candidates for federal office.
 - iii. But in fact much of the money is recycled into presidential and

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- congressional campaigns.
- iv. Money contributed for this purpose is not regulated and does not have to be reported.
- B. ✳ Independent expenditures
1. The Supreme Court has said that parties can spend money on “generic ads” so long as they are independent of candidates.
 - i. Generic ads do not explicitly advocate a vote for one party or another, but that is their intended message.
 2. Groups that operate separately from the presidential and congressional campaigns are not limited in spending.
 3. These committees provide opportunities for individuals to give more than maximums.
- C. ✳Buckley v. Valeo
1. Supreme Court’s “money talks” decision allows candidates to spend unlimited amounts of their personal wealth on their campaigns.
- D. ✳Personal political action committees (PACs)
1. Individuals can set up their own PACs, which can contribute to candidates.
 2. These individuals, particularly members of Congress, become just so many more “power centers.”
- VI. NEXT TIME:
- A. Film, “Washington’s Other Scandal”
- B. The Congress
- C. Reading:
1. Required: “Campaign Finance Special Report: Money Troubles,” by Dan Froomkin, *Washington Post*, September 4, 1998 in the Cyber Reserve Room or <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/campfin/campfin.htm>
 - i. This short article has several parts. Look at each as background for the film “Washington’s Other Scandal.”
 2. Recommended: “Campaign Finance Reform: A Source book” at http://www.brook.edu/gs/cf/cf_hp.htm
 3. Recommended: “Campaign Finance Reform,” a link that advertise itself as “A balanced yet comprehensive guide to the politics of campaign finance reform.” (<http://campaignfinance.homestead.com/files/>)
 4. Recommended: The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA) in the Cyber Reserve Room or at www.brook.edu/GS/CF/debate/challenge.htm