



# FEW ARE ★ CHOSEN ★

PROBLEMS IN PRESIDENTIAL  
SELECTION

ROBERT E. DICLERICO/ERIC M. USLANER

D712.24

D545

# FEW ARE CHOSEN

## PROBLEMS IN PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION

被選的權力

總統選舉中的問題

**Robert E. DiClerico**

West Virginia University

**Eric M. Uslaner**

University of Maryland

**McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY**

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá  
Hamburg Johannesburg London Madrid Mexico Montreal New Delhi  
Panama Paris São Paulo Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto

This book was set in Times Roman by University Graphics, Inc.  
The editors were Phillip A. Butcher and Christina Mediate;  
the production supervisor was Charles Hess.  
Project supervision was done by The Total Book.  
The cover was designed by Janice Noto.  
The cover photograph was taken by Wide World Photos.  
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

**FEW ARE CHOSEN**  
**Problems in Presidential Selection**

Copyright © 1984 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC DOC 8 9 8 7 6 5 4

ISBN 0-07-016805-9

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

DiClerico, Robert E.

Few are chosen.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Presidents—United States—Nomination.

I. Uslaner, Eric M. II. Title.

JK521.D52 1984 324.5'0973 83-11353

ISBN 0-07-016805-9 (pbk.)

**For Debbie and Devon**

---

# PREFACE

---

This book stems from our belief that there are many key problems associated with nominating and electing our Presidents which are in fact subject to manipulation in the best sense of that term. We believe that there is something we can do about the nominating system, the role of the media, the effect of money, our system for electing the President, the decreasing turnout in national elections, and the relations between the President and Congress. Each of these topics is discussed in the following chapters, along with a general reform proposal that will no doubt be controversial. While we don't expect all our readers to agree with this proposal—indeed, the two of us are not in anything close to complete agreement on it—we think it is important to focus on aspects of the selection process that are amenable to change.

Although this has been a joint endeavor, Robert DiClerico had primary responsibility for drafting the introduction and the first three chapters while Eric Uslaner drafted Chapters 4 through 6 and the epilogue. We would like to express our deep appreciation to several individuals for their wise and penetrating reviews of the manuscript: Donald Gross, University of Kentucky; Paul Light, University of Virginia; Lawrence Longley, Lawrence University; Dennis M. Simon, University of Minnesota; Harold Stanley, University of Rochester; and Robert Weissberg, University of Illinois.

Others also made significant contributions. Robert DiClerico wishes to thank Allan Hammock for the release time necessary to complete this project. In addition, a very special thank you is due Cheryl Flagg whose typing talents enabled her to produce nearly flawless drafts, often on very short notice.

Eric Uslaner is particularly grateful to John Gates for his help on the research tasks large and small, from the large intellectual problems to the more numerous routine tasks involved in preparation of a book such as this, and particularly for the detailed comments that he gave on each chapter. Other colleagues, M. Margaret Conway and Michael Mumper, also provided support and helpful critiques of various ideas and drafts. Judy Staples expertly typed the numerous drafts more cheerfully than Uslaner rewrote them. And Uslaner is especially indebted to his wife Debbie for a more profound form of sustenance.

Finally, we would both like to acknowledge the valuable assistance provided to us by project supervisor Annette Bodzin. Her prodigious efforts at the editorial stage were instrumental in allowing us to meet a tight deadline.

*Robert E. DiClerico*

*Eric M. Uslander*

# **FEW ARE CHOSEN**

**PROBLEMS IN  
PRESIDENTIAL  
SELECTION**

---

# CONTENTS

---

	PREFACE	xi
	INTRODUCTION	1
<b>1</b>	<b>Democratizing of the Nominating Process</b>	<b>5</b>
	THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING PROCESS: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	6
	THE NEW REFORM ERA: 1971–1978	8
	The First Round, 1971	9
	The Second Round, 1974	14
	The Third Round, 1978	16
	A Parallel Development: More Primaries	18
	ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE REFORMS	19
	More Candidates	19
	The Process Is Too Long	21
	Premature Closure	23
	Unrepresentative Primary Results	26
	The Decline in Quality Control	27
	The Rubber Stamp Convention	31
	REFORMING THE REFORMS, 1982	32
	OTHER REFORM PROPOSALS	34
	Primary Clusterings	35
	National Primary	35
	CONCLUSION	37
	NOTES	38
<b>2</b>	<b>The Media in Presidential Selection</b>	<b>43</b>
	THE MEDIA PRESENCE	44
	THE MEDIA AS ARBITERS AND INTERPRETERS	46
	Identifying Serious Candidates	46
	The Media as Interpreters of Results	48
		vii



THE MEDIA AS INFORMERS	53
Informing by Reporting	53
Television Advertising	58
PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES	66
CONCLUSION	68
NOTES	70
 <b>3 The Role of Money in Presidential Selection</b>	 <b>76</b>
MONEY IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS: PRE-1974	77
Laws and Loopholes	77
The Role of Money: Access and Outcomes	79
The Role of Money: Influence-Buying	82
THE MOVEMENT TOWARD REFORM	83
Enter the Court: <i>Buckley v. Valeo</i>	86
ASSESSING THE REFORMS	87
Disclosure	87
Limits on Contributions	88
Spending Limits	91
Public Financing	94
Major and Minor Parties	96
Independent Expenditures	98
CONCLUSION	101
APPENDIX: Major Provisions of The Federal Election Campaign Act Amendments of 1974, 1976, 1979	101
NOTES	104
 <b>4 The Turnout Puzzle</b>	 <b>107</b>
WHY SHOULD ANYONE VOTE?	109
WHO ARE THE VOTERS AND NONVOTERS?	113
RATES OF INTEREST	117
PARTISAN POLITICAL FACTORS	119
REGISTRATION AND VOTING	121
CHANGES IN TURNOUT	123
WHO DOESN'T VOTE?	129
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION	131
SHOULD WE CARE?	132
NOTES	133

<b>5</b>	<b>The Electoral College</b>	<b>142</b>
	FAITHLESS, HOPELESS, AND UNCHARITABLE ELECTORS	147
	ALLEGED BENEFITS OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE	149
	The Electoral College Reinforces Federalism	149
	The Electoral College Represents Nonvoters	150
	The Electoral College Minimizes Voter Fraud	151
	The Electoral College Minimizes	
	Multiple Candidacies	152
	The Electoral College Provides a Mandate	
	to Govern	154
	UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS/BIG STATES, SMALL STATES	156
	The Alleged Small State Bias	156
	Power to the People?	157
	Who Really Wins?	162
	THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE	163
	District System	164
	Proportional Systems	165
	National Bonus Plan	165
	THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE AND DIRECT ELECTION:	
	IMPLICATIONS FOR PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION	166
<b>6</b>	<b>The Problem of Presidential Leadership</b>	<b>171</b>
	PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS AND	
	PROFESSIONAL AMATEURS	172
	CRITERIA FOR LEADERSHIP	179
	CAN WE PREDICT PERFORMANCE?	189
	HOW TO GET BETTER CANDIDATES	193
	NOTES	198
	EPILOGUE	202
	NOTES	206
	INDEX	209

---

# INTRODUCTION

---

The Presidency has evolved into the focal point and energizing force in the American political system. This development is not altogether surprising, for among the three branches of government it possesses the greatest capacity to provide sustained national leadership. Clearly, the Supreme Court is not well suited to such a role, since the judges may speak only when spoken to and what they say must be confined to the case immediately before them. Although Congress is free to focus its attention on any issue, both size and multiplicity of interests virtually assure that it will speak with many voices. The President alone has the ability to speak with one voice on any matter he chooses.

As an instrument of national leadership, the Presidency is, of course, only as effective as the individual who wields it. Some have done so with considerable success. They knew where they wanted to take the nation and possessed the necessary political skills to get it there. Others, lacking the requisite sense of direction and political skill, were not shapers of events as much as they were shaped by them.

A scanning of just the last fifty years reveals that Presidents can affect our national life and the world in significant ways. In marked contrast with his predecessor, Franklin Roosevelt took office believing that government had an obligation to help those unable to help themselves. This conviction gave birth to an unparalleled number of federal programs which brought hope and relief to a population laboring under the greatest economic crisis in our history. Harry Truman's decision to grant massive economic assistance to Europe after

World War II not only proved instrumental in its revitalization but also forged an enduring bond between the two continents. The effort to reach some kind of accommodation with the Soviet Union, begun by Eisenhower and accelerated under Nixon, Ford, and Carter, created an international environment less precarious than it would have been otherwise. Civil rights for blacks would no doubt have come later rather than sooner had John Kennedy not placed the issue more prominently on the national agenda and had Lyndon Johnson not been committed to seeing this goal through to fruition. Still more recently, and in a less positive vein, it is all too clear that the events of Vietnam and Watergate spawned a public cynicism about government from which we have not yet fully recovered. Presidents can indeed make a difference.

If Presidents are of great consequence in the scheme of things, so too must be the way we go about choosing them. It is to this matter that we turn in this book. Our purpose is not to describe the intricacies of the Presidential selection process from start to finish. Rather, we shall focus on those aspects of the process that some have characterized as vulnerabilities. In examining these "problem areas" we shall consider why they are viewed as such, assess the validity of these concerns, and where appropriate suggest what corrective measures might be taken.

Efforts to democratize the nominating process, the subject of Chapter 1, have generated a robust debate for more than a decade. Some have welcomed these changes on the grounds that they have rendered the nominating process more accessible to voters and potential candidates. On the other hand, there is also a considerable body of opinion which maintains that these reforms have substantially increased the burdens of seeking the Presidency, fostered a premature resolution of the contest, eliminated an important element of quality control over candidates, and not necessarily led to outcomes that are more reflective of popular preferences.

In Chapter 2 we turn our attention to the media as actors in the Presidential selection process. Concern voiced over the role of media is at once old and new. Ever since the debut of television campaign commercials in the 1952 Presidential election, we have repeatedly been warned that they represent an unhealthy development in American electoral politics. These advertisements, it is argued, are designed more to manipulate than inform and thus they impede the rational assessment of Presidential candidates. More recently, the reporting function of the media has also captured the attention of political observers. Changes in the nominating process, along with television's expanded commitment to news, have combined to elevate the importance of the media's campaign coverage. Which candidates become the focus of their attention, what they tell us about them, and how they interpret the race can influence the selection process in ways that are significant and not always beneficial.

Although money may not be viewed as the root of *all* evil in electoral poli-

tics, many have long felt that it accounts for much of what is wrong with the way we choose our Presidents. This crucially important resource has been accused of exercising an undue influence on who can run, who wins, and what kinds of policy decisions the winner makes in office. While these concerns have prompted legislative action from time to time, not until the 1970s did Congress make a serious effort to regulate the flow of private money into Presidential campaigns. Interestingly enough, however, this landmark legislation has generated as much controversy as the problems it was attempting to correct. In Chapter 3 we consider the role of money in Presidential selection prior and subsequent to the recent campaign finance reforms.

Earlier we noted that Presidents can make a difference. This being the case, one might reasonably expect voters to take advantage of the opportunity to register their preference for President. In fact, however, analysts have recorded a steady decline in voter turnout since 1960, with only slightly more than half the eligible voters journeying to the polls in the 1980 election. Moreover, this decline has occurred despite an increasingly educated public and the elimination of many legal barriers to voting. What factors have been responsible for this trend, and should these factors themselves be a source for concern? Would the results of recent Presidential elections have been different had more people gone to the polls? What implications does low turnout have for a President's mandate to govern? These questions will constitute the focus of our attention in Chapter 4.

Over the course of the last century nearly all facets of the Presidential selection process have been altered in one way or another. The major exception is the Electoral College, which has remained essentially unchanged since 1804. For many, this is precisely the problem. Arguing that the Electoral College is replete with real and potential inequities, some critics insist that it must be redesigned, while others call for abolishing it altogether. Defenders, on the other hand, claim that the electorate, the states, our major parties, and the President have all been well served by the Founding Fathers' creation. We should, therefore, leave well enough alone. In Chapter 5 we examine the issues central to this debate.

The interface of Presidential selection and Presidential leadership, although treated at various points in the book, is addressed more comprehensively in Chapter 6. Running for President and being President are not two discrete enterprises, each unrelated to the other. On the contrary, the criteria by which candidates are judged and the alliances they must forge to win have a great deal to do with the quality of leadership we can expect from them as President. Many feel the reforms of the nominating process have served to divorce Presidential selection from Presidential governance. More precisely, the personal qualifications necessary to win bear little relationship to those required to lead. Nor is a candidate compelled to gain the confidence of those with whom he

must ultimately share power once in office. Although we concur with this assessment, we shall argue that the old system suffered from these same problems, though to a lesser degree. Accordingly, in this final chapter we propose a more fundamental change in the Presidential nominating process—one which, we believe, holds out greater promise of yielding nominees who have the qualifications and support necessary to lead the nation.

---

## DEMOCRATIZING THE NOMINATING PROCESS

---

At various points throughout our political history, the Presidential nomination process has been subject to changes designed to render it more open to popular participation. The most recent, and perhaps also the most sustained, effort in this regard was undertaken during most of the decade of the seventies. Initiated primarily by the Democratic party, the first round of changes came in 1971, only to be followed by a second wave in 1974, and still a third wave in 1978. Each round brought with it an evergrowing number of critics, including scholars, public officials, and journalists alike, all charging that the political system had not been well served by several of these reforms. The following provides just a sampling of the disenchantment:

The danger of democracy is not that democracy is dangerous, but that we somehow bring ourselves to believe that the democracy of the town hall can be extended to nationwide decisions. The danger of democracy thus becomes a danger that we will lose democracy in our attempt to gain more of it. We do not expect to decide national energy policy by referendum, voting on eight or ten proposals put forward by eight or ten groups. . . . Yet we expect to pick our president, a far more complex determination and infinitely more important than an energy policy, by participatory disorder that knows no equal in American society.<sup>1</sup>

Terry Sanford, former Governor of North Carolina

In the present nominating system, the determinants of success are the size of the candidate's ambitions, the extent of his leisure time and the tolerance of his family,

his budget and his job for almost unlimited travel. Those characteristics have almost nothing to do with the qualities that make an effective president—as the results show. It is a recklessly haphazard way to choose the candidates for that demanding office.<sup>2</sup>

David Broder, Washington columnist

There is no peer review—that is, there is no process by which other party and government leaders can personally screen the records and characters of the various aspirants and effectively eliminate those they find lacking in the experience and skills needed to be good candidates and effective presidents.<sup>3</sup>

Austin Ranney, political scientist

That the concern reflected in these statements was widely shared is evidenced by the fact that as of March 1982 no fewer than seventeen commissions, committees, panels, and study groups were engaged in a comprehensive reassessment of the Presidential nominating process.<sup>4</sup>

The purposes of this chapter are to outline the major reforms of the 1969–1978 period, along with their rationale; identify and assess the persuasiveness of the criticisms directed at the reforms; evaluate how the Democratic party responded to these criticisms in their 1982 rules changes; and, finally, consider what further changes in the nominating process may seem appropriate. Before turning to these matters, however, it is first necessary to provide some historical perspective on the nominating process.

## THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING PROCESS: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Among the democracies of the world, the United States stands alone in according its citizens a significant role in determining who their choices shall be for the highest office in the land. The American electorate had not always been accorded this role, however. On the contrary, from 1800–1824, Presidential nominees were chosen by Congressional caucus; that is, the Congressional membership in each party met and decided on a candidate to carry its banner in the general election. That this practice proved to be short-lived was due to a combination of factors. For one thing, it drew heavy criticism from such notables as Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, and John C. Calhoun, all of whom were rejected for the Republican nomination in 1824. The caucus instead chose William Crawford who went on to lose badly in the general election. In addition, a growing number of state and local party leaders voiced their opposition to the Congressional caucus because it denied them any role whatsoever in the selection process. Third, the limited number of participants in this system was perceived as inappropriate once Jacksonian democracy had taken hold in the country.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, after a brief transition period during which Presidential candidates were nominated by state legislatures or local



conventions, the political parties instituted a new system, namely, national conventions. First employed in 1831, these conventions were composed of delegates chosen by each state's political party. The methods for selecting these delegates varied; in some instances the governor was allowed to pick them; in others a party's state committee made the selection. The most common practice adopted by the state parties, however, was the caucus-convention. Under this system, party members caucused at the precinct or township level and selected delegates to go on to a county caucus, which in turn elected delegates to a state convention. The state convention then picked a group of delegates to attend the party's national convention. By the turn of the century, however, many had become disillusioned with this method of nominating Presidents as well. More specifically, the process provided little opportunity for public participation; it was perceived as subject to near total manipulation by the party bosses; few regulations existed on convention procedures and even those were honored more in the breach; presiding officers at the conventions ruled with a heavy hand; strong-arm tactics were used to prevent certain delegates from entering the conventions and to intimidate others once they got there; and many of the delegates chosen by the party apparatus proved to be unsavory characters more than willing to sell their votes to the highest bidder.<sup>6</sup> This state of affairs gave rise to a reform movement spearheaded by the Progressives, the purpose of which was to involve the voters directly in the nominating process. As a means of achieving this goal, the reformers called for the establishment of Presidential primaries. Administered by the states rather than the parties, this mechanism would allow the voters themselves to elect their state's delegates to the national convention. In 1904 the Florida state legislature became the first to adopt a statute permitting parties to choose some or all of its delegates by primary. A year later Wisconsin, home of the Progressive movement, went one step further and passed legislation requiring that all its delegates to the Republican and Democratic national conventions be chosen by Presidential primary. Moreover, in order that the elected delegates might be provided some guidance concerning voter preferences, the legislation specified that the primary ballot also list the Presidential candidates themselves. Other states soon followed the lead of Florida and Wisconsin and by the year 1916 twenty-six states had adopted a primary of one kind or another.<sup>7</sup> The initial enthusiasm for primaries gradually waned, however, not only because party leaders opposed them but also because of cost, disappointing turnouts, and the refusal of many Presidential contenders to enter them. Thus, by 1935 eight states had abandoned this method of selecting delegates and returned to the caucus-convention or appointment system.<sup>8</sup> In subsequent years some states returned to the primary and others repealed it until "by 1968 the number appeared to have stabilized at sixteen states plus the District of Columbia."<sup>9</sup>

In summary, by the time of the 1968 Presidential election the nominating process had evolved into a system whereby national convention delegates could