

SORAU
and BECK

**PARTY
POLITICS
IN AMERICA**

SIXTH EDITION

PARTY POLITICS IN AMERICA

Sixth Edition

Frank J. Sorauf

University of Minnesota

Paul Allen Beck

The Ohio State University

Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown College Division

Scott, Foresman and Company

Glenview, Illinois Boston London

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Sorauf, Frank J. (Frank Joseph), 1928-
Party politics in America.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Political parties—United States.

I. Beck, Paul Allen. II. Title.

JK2265.S65 1987 324.273 87-26450

ISBN 0-673-39750-5

Copyright © 1988 by Frank J. Sorauf and Paul Allen Beck

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 — RRC — 93 92 91 90 89 88

Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgments

Table 2.1: Data from 1932 through 1960 from Donald E. Stokes and Gudmund R. Iverson, "On the Existence of Forces Restoring Party Competition," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1962), p. 162. Reprinted by permission.

Table 2.2: From John F. Bibby et al., "Parties in State Politics," Copyright © 1983 by John F. Bibby, Cornelius P. Cotter, James L. Gibson, and Robert J. Huckshorn, in Virginia Gray, Herbert Jacob, and Kenneth N. Vines, eds., *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 4th ed. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

Excerpt, p. 53: From Warren Weaver, Jr., *The New York Times*, January 22, 1980. Copyright © 1980 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

Figure 2.1: Adapted by permission from Joseph A. Schlesinger, "On the Theory of Party Organization," *The Journal of Politics* 46 (May 1984), p. 370.

Excerpts, pp. 72-73: From H. G. Nicholas, "A Briton Considers Our Bewildering Party Apparatus," *The Reporter*, November 25, 1952, pp. 28-29. Reprinted by permission.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2: Reprinted from *Intergovernmental Perspectives*, U.S. ACIR, Fall 1984.

Excerpts, pp. 86-87: From Milton Rakove, *Don't Make No Waves, Don't Back No Losers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 120, 121, 122. Reprinted by permission.

Acknowledgments continue on p. 513.

PARTY
POLITICS
IN
AMERICA

To our parents

Preface

This sixth edition of *Party Politics in America* is different from its predecessors in many respects, but the most obvious is that I have joined Frank Sorauf as co-author. Full responsibility for preparing the new edition was mine. I have revised a substantial portion of the material in the fifth edition to incorporate new developments and new research, more current case studies and examples, and my own perspectives and presentational style. The sixth edition, for example, adds an extended discussion of partisan realignments, particularly their place in the history of the party system; chronicles the continuing changes in American party organizations; and expands the treatment of deviations from two-partyism, incentives for party activity, electoral turnout, and the president as party leader. Overall, those familiar with the previous edition will find some chapters to be quite different in this new edition but most only updated to reflect research and developments of the last four years. Amid all of these changes, I have retained the theoretical perspective and chapter structure of the previous edition—in the conviction that they accurately portray the dimensions of party politics in America. Whatever sins of commission and omission have emerged in the process, though, are mine.

The contributions of Frank Sorauf to the sixth edition were invaluable. In spite of the many months and countless hours of labor that I invested in the revision, the book would not be what it is but for my inheritance from him and his continuing advice. His vast knowledge of American political parties and judicious treatment of their role in the political process have indelibly shaped this edition, first through their powerful influence on my own thinking and then through the sturdy structure on which my modest remodeling has been based. I hope that I have at least preserved the rich legacy Frank left me. If I have been able to see any farther or more clearly in this sixth edition, it is because I have been able to stand on his shoulders.

In my efforts, I also was assisted by so many people that I would have to enlarge this book considerably to properly credit each of them. A few contributed so much to the final product, however, that they deserve special recognition. Allen Risley served ably as my research assistant throughout in tracking down fugitive information and updating tables and figures from ICPSR archives. Joseph Schlesinger gave me the benefit of a careful and constructive reading of the entire manuscript,

restraining his well-known reservations about its basic conceptualization of the party as an organization, an electorate, and a set of officeholders. The Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research played its familiar role in providing recent national election studies for secondary analysis. The Federal Elections Commission and the Citizens Research Foundation helped me to solve some of the mysteries of campaign finance; the Democratic and Republican national committees furnished me with up-to-date information on their activities; and Henry Glick and Paul Piccard shared their expertise with me on judicial appointments and the electoral college, respectively. John Covell, political science editor, and his colleagues contributed valuable support and professional advice. The Florida State University generously provided me with released time. The footnotes on the pages that follow chronicle the great debt I owe to the many scholars whose research has illuminated party politics and reinvigorated the study of parties in recent years. Without their rich contributions, this would have been a far more modest book, if a book at all.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to my immediate family—Tere, Danny, and David—who were remarkably indulgent of my regular disappearance into my study to monopolize our(!) computer; and to my parents and grandmother, who early on instilled in me an abiding interest in party politics.

Paul Allen Beck
The Ohio State University

**PARTY
POLITICS
IN
AMERICA**

Contents

I

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS 1

- 1 In Search of the Political Parties 7
- 2 The American Two-Party System 33

II

THE POLITICAL PARTY AS AN ORGANIZATION 67

- 3 The State and Local Party Organizations 72
- 4 The Political Party of the Activists 101
- 5 National Organizations: A New Presence at the Summit 131

III

THE POLITICAL PARTY AS AN ELECTORATE 155

- 6 The Loyal Electorates 160
- 7 The Party within the Voter 191
- 8 The Active Electorate 208

IV

THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS 239

- 9 The Naming of the Party Candidates 242
- 10 The Campaign for Election 270
- 11 Presidential Politics: The Preliminaries 302
- 12 Presidential Politics: Convention and Campaign 331
- 13 Financing the Campaigns 361

V

THE PARTY IN GOVERNMENT 391

- 14 Party and Partisans in the Legislature 396
- 15 The Party in the Executive and Judiciary 424
- 16 The Quest for Party Government 447

VI

THE POLITICAL PARTIES: ROLE AND THEORY 477

- 17 The Future of the American Parties 480
- 18 Toward a Theory of the Political Party 496

INDEX 515

I

Parties and Party Systems

The open and aggressive pursuit of personal interest will probably never win the admiration of any society. It certainly has not won the admiration of ours in spite of a strong capitalistic ethos. Yet the things men and women want for themselves and for others—status, security, justice, and wealth, for example—are in short supply. People compete for them by trying to influence government to recognize their claims rather than those of others. This striving to win through government the things we think desirable—a striving we call “politics”—is therefore widespread.

The pervasiveness of politics is a central fact of our times. We have seen in the twentieth century an enormous expansion of governmental activity. The demands of a complex, increasingly urbanized, industrialized society, and the dictates of a world beset by international tensions, do not easily permit a return to limited government. For the foreseeable future, a substantial proportion of the important conflicts over the desirable things in American society will be settled within the political system. Indeed, some would argue that intense conflicts can be resolved only through politics, if at all. The really meaningful issues of our time will surely be how influence and power are organized within the political system, who wins the rewards and successes of that political activity, and to whom the people who make the decisions are responsible. It will increasingly be within the political system that we will decide, in the candid phrase of Harold Lasswell, “who gets what, when, how.”¹

In the United States, these political contestings are directed largely at the regular institutions of government. Few political scientists believe that the real and important political decisions are made clandestinely by murky, semivisible elites and merely ratified by the governmental

¹The phrase comes from the title of Harold Lasswell's pioneering book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936).

2 Parties and Party Systems

bodies they control.² It may happen, to be sure, that political decisions in a local community are made by a group of influential local citizens rather than by a city council or a mayor or a school board. Nonetheless, one is reasonably safe in looking for the substance of American politics in the legislatures, executives, and courts of the nation, the fifty states, and localities. The politics of which we have been talking consists, therefore, of the attempts to influence either the making of decisions within these governmental bodies or the selecting of the men and women who will make them.

This struggle for influence, this “politics,” is not unorganized, however confusing it may seem to be. Large political organizations attempt to mobilize influence on behalf of aggregates of individuals. In the Western democracies the political party is unquestionably the most important and pervasive of these political organizations. It is not, however, the only one. Interest groups such as the American Farm Bureau Federation and the AFL-CIO also mobilize influence. So do smaller factions and cliques, charismatic individuals, and nonparty political organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action and the American Conservative Union. And so do the political action committees (PACs) that pay a substantial part of the costs of American campaigning. Even ostensibly nonpolitical organizations—e.g., churches, civic clubs, ethnic group associations—may from time to time play important roles as political intermediaries.

In spite of the prominent role parties play in organizing this struggle and their centrality to this book, therefore, the term “politics” refers to much more than the activities of the political parties. A substantial portion of American politics goes on within and through the political parties, but a substantial portion also goes on outside them, especially in recent years. Interest groups rather than parties, for example, bring certain issues and policy questions to legislatures and administrative agencies. Nonparty organizations also support candidates for office with money and manpower, sometimes even more effectively than the parties do. Thus, the terms *politics* and *political* include not only the activity of the political parties but also that of other political organizers.

At this point, it may help to step back and survey the entire political system in order to understand the place of parties and other political organizations in it (Figure I.1). All these political organizations work as *intermediaries* between the millions of political individuals and the distant policymakers in government. They build influence into large

² C. Wright Mills, in *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), offers the best-known example of such interpretations of American politics. For a parallel “elitist” account of community politics, see Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953). The alternative “pluralist” perspective adopted by most political scientists is well illustrated in Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

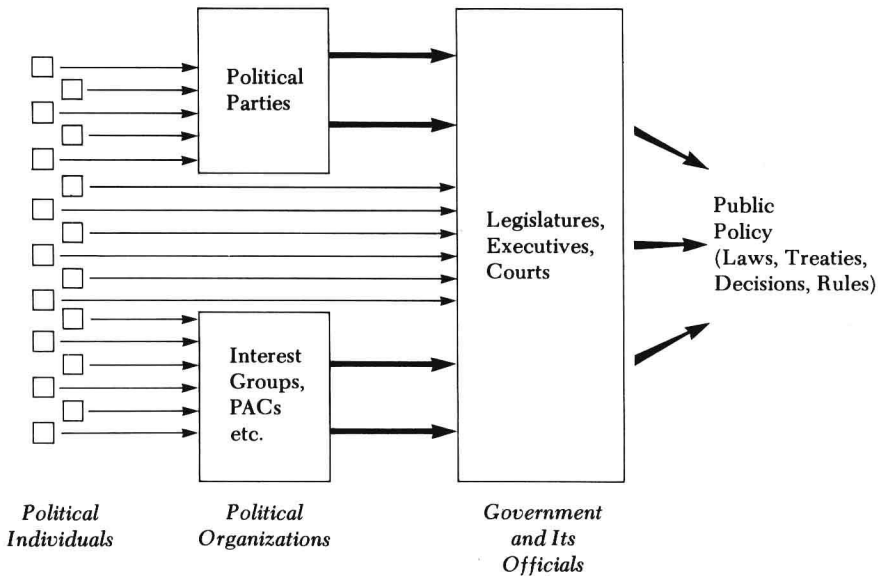


FIGURE I.1 *Political Organizations As Organizing Intermediaries in the Political System*

aggregates in order to have a greater effect on the selection of policymakers and the policies they will make. At the same time, they codify and simplify information about government and politics as it moves back to the individual. In a very real sense, therefore, these political organizers are the informal agents by which individuals are represented in the complex democracies of our time. They are both the builders and the agents of majorities.

In any political system, the political organizations develop an informal division of labor. The political parties concentrate on contesting elections as a way of aggregating influence. Others, especially the interest groups, pursue the avenues of direct influence on legislators or administrators in articulating the demands of narrower groups. Still others seek mainly to propagate ideologies or build support on specific issues of foreign or domestic policy. Indeed, the nature of the division of labor among the various political intermediaries says a great deal about any political system and about the general processes of mobilizing influence within it. The division also speaks meaningfully about the political parties. It is a commonplace, for example, that among the parties of the democracies, the American political parties are occupied to an unusual extent with the single activity of contesting elections. The parties of Western Europe, on the other hand, have been more committed to spreading ideologies and disciplining legislators as well. And those of countries such as India play important roles in transmitting political values and information to

4 Parties and Party Systems

a citizenry that lacks other avenues of political socialization and communication.

The division of labor among political organizations is, however, neither clear nor permanent. There is always an overlapping—and hence a competition—among political organizations over the performance of their activities. That competition is most obvious when it takes place within the party system, the competition of one party against another. It also takes place, however, between parties and other political intermediaries—for example, in the competition of parties and powerful interest groups for the attention and support of legislators or for the right to name a candidate in a primary election. Furthermore, the extent to which any one kind of political organization controls or participates in any one kind of organizing activity may change radically over time. Certainly, no one would argue that the American political parties today control as much of the business of campaigning as they did 70 or 80 years ago.

All of this competing for a role in American politics implies another kind of competition. The political organizations compete among themselves for political resources: money, skills, expertise, the efforts of men and women. All of these resources are necessary for the fueling of organizational activity, but none of them is in particularly abundant supply in the American society. Then, with those resources at hand, they compete for the support of individual citizens—that is, they seek their support for the goals and leadership of the organization. In sum, the parties and other political organizations compete for scarce resources with which to mobilize the political influence necessary to capture the scarce rewards the political system allocates. They compete first for the capacity to organize influence and then for the influence itself.³

Despite these excursions beyond the subject of political parties, however, this is a book about political parties. The broader survey of politics and political organizations has merely been background for two themes that will recur throughout the remainder of the book. The first is that the political party is not the unique political organization we have conventionally thought it to be. On the contrary, it is frequently similar to other political organizations, and the difficulty of coming to a clear, agreed-on definition of a political party illustrates that point only too well. When one undertakes any exercise in definition, as we do for the parties in the first chapter, the temptation is always to err on the side of the distinctiveness, even the uniqueness, of the phenomenon one is trying to define. It may well be that the distinctions between parties

³The classic treatments of political intermediation are Arthur Bentley, *The Process of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908) and David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951). For a more recent examination of the changing role of intermediary groups, see Byron E. Shafer, "Reform and Alienation: The Decline of Intermediation in the Politics of Presidential Selection," *The Journal of Law and Politics* 1 (1983): 93–132.

and other political organizations are not, after all, so great as one might imagine. Parties do have their distinctive qualities—and it is important to know them—but there is little point in denying their similarity and, in some cases, their functional equivalence to many other political organizations.

Second, the broad perspective is essential background for assessing the role and position of the political parties in the American democracy. American writers about the political parties have not been modest in their claims for them. They have celebrated the parties as agents of democracy and even as the chosen instruments through which a democratic citizenry governs itself. Some have gone a step further to proclaim them the architects of the democratic processes that they now serve. E. E. Schattschneider opened his classic study of the American parties this way in 1942:

The rise of political parties is indubitably one of the principal distinguishing marks of modern government. The parties, in fact, have played a major role as *makers* of democratic government. It should be stated flatly at the outset that this volume is devoted to the thesis that the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties.⁴

Other scholars, and many thoughtful Americans, too, agree that the American democracy presumes the two-party system of today. Similar paeans to political parties are sounded by some observers of the development of democracy in new nations.⁵

This heroic view of parties stands in stark contrast to recurrent expressions of antiparty sentiment and the general ambivalence about the parties found in the American political culture. The Republic's Founding Fathers were wary of organized factions in political life, as is exemplified by James Madison's famous peroration against the "mischiefs of faction" in *Federalist* #10. The Progressive reforms a century or so later were directed in large part against the perceived evils of political parties and their control over the political process. Antiparty sentiment has intensified once again in recent years, providing fertile ground for yet another series of party reforms. Many Americans today, among them certainly many readers of this book, are skeptical of the value of parties in our politics and may view them as the adversaries rather than the guardians of political democracy.⁶

⁴E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Rinehart, 1942), p. 1.

⁵Illustrations of this favorable treatment of parties as crucial to the democratization of new nations may be found in David Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), Chapter 6; and Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

⁶Austin Ranney provides an excellent account of these antiparty attitudes and reforms in *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

Nor do the immodest claims for political parties give adequate recognition to the fact that the major American parties have changed and continue to change—both in the form of their organization and in the pattern and style of their activities. Political parties as they existed a century ago scarcely exist today, and the political parties we know today may not exist even a half-century from now. In this book, a vigorous case will be made for the proposition that the political parties have lost their preeminent position as political organizations and that competing political organizations and other institutions now perform many of the activities traditionally regarded as the parties' exclusive prerogatives.⁷ If this is really the case, we must face the question of whether political parties are indeed indispensable and inevitable shapers of our democratic politics.

These two suspicions—that the parties may be less distinctive and their activities less pervasive than we have thought—add up, perhaps, to no more than a plea for modesty in the study of the American political parties. It is perfectly natural for both young and experienced scholars to identify with the objects of their study and thus to exaggerate their importance. Medievalists often find the late Middle Ages to be the high point of Western civilization, and most scholars of hitherto obscure painters and philosophers find the objects of their study to have been sadly neglected or tragically underestimated. So, too, has it been with the study of political parties.

All of this is not to suggest, out of hand, that the American political parties are or have been of little importance. Their long life and their role in the politics of the world's oldest representative democracy scarcely lead to that conclusion. The plea here is merely for a careful assessment, for an abandoning of preconceptions, old judgments, and "great general truths." Assertions that political parties are essential to or the keystone of American democracy may or may not be true, but simply as assertions they advance our understanding of politics and parties very little. The same is true of predispositions to the contrary—that political parties are unnecessary or baneful influences upon a democratic politics. The proof is in the evidence, and the evidence is to be found in a detailed examination of what the political parties are and what they do. That examination is the task of this book.

⁷See also Anthony King, "Political Parties in Western Democracies," *Polity* 2 (1969): 111-41.

1

IN SEARCH OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

What is a political party? Is it the group of people who identify with that party—who, for example, say they are Democrats or Republicans? It is unlikely that they ever worked within the party organization of their choice, or gave it money. They probably do not know the party's platform commitments or feel any need to support them. Their loyalty probably doesn't extend beyond a predisposition to vote for the party's candidates at elections, *if all other considerations are fairly equal*. Yet when asked, they hesitate not at all to attach themselves to that political party, and in a few states the mere declaration on primary election day that they are Democrats or Republicans qualifies them to select party candidates for office. Or is the party the people who are officially registered as its voters? They have made a relatively long-standing public declaration and, by this act, have earned the right in many states to participate in the party's selection of candidates for office. But they probably differ little from the above identifiers in party activity, platform commitments, and voting loyalty.

Or is the political party the combination of functionaries and activists who are involved in the regular business of the party organization? Some of them have been selected to represent the party under the statutory authority of a state. They do work for the party and doubtlessly are more familiar with its platform stances even if they exhibit little more fealty to them than do ordinary party voters. And by the visibility of their involvement, they publicly announce that they have cast their lot with the party. The American parties are also organizations. It is possible to join them, to work within them, to become officers in them, to participate in setting their goals and strategies—much as one would within a local fraternal organization or a machinists' union. They have characteristics we associate with social organizations: stable, patterned

personal relationships and common goals. In other words, they are more than aggregates of people clinging with various degrees of intensity to a party label.

Or is the political party the sum total of elected officeholders who wear the party label in legislative, executive, and even judicial offices throughout the land? They too have been active in party work, if only in running for election; are more aware than are party voters of what the party stands for, even though that doesn't always command their fealty; and have publicly committed themselves to the party. Their party role is codified in the statutes of many states, and they have taken the additional step of qualifying as the party's representative for a particular office. Moreover, the legislators among them often meet together in caucus to make important decisions in the party name.

American political parties may be any or all of these things. The act of defining the political party, and the American parties in particular, is hampered by the fact that the political party can be different things to different people. The definition is often a personal perception; it seems to depend on what one is looking for, what one hopes to see, what consequences one wants parties to have. (See, for example, the range of definitions in the box.) Any one person's definition is likely to be rooted in a particular time and orientation and therefore is not likely to reflect the diversity that marks the parties. Whatever the reason, however, neither political scientists nor politicians have achieved any consensus on what sets the political party apart from other political organizations.

Despite the absence of consensus, however, the most common definitions fall into three main categories. Those whose approach is ideological define the parties in terms of commonly held ideas, values, or stands on issues—as a group of like-minded people. That approach has not engaged many observers of the American political parties, for ideological homogeneity or purpose has not been a hallmark of the major American parties, even if it may describe those groupings of political leaders that became the first American parties. Most of the attempts at definition vacillate between two other options. One of these views the political party as a hierarchical organization or structure that draws into its orbit large numbers of voters, candidates, and active party workers. The other approach sees the political parties largely in terms of what they do—their role, function, or activities in the American political systems. Proponents of this approach frequently identify American political parties with election campaigns. We now turn to these two approaches.

THE POLITICAL PARTY AS A SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Large organizations or social structures consist of people in various roles, responsibilities, patterns of activities, and reciprocal relationships. But