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Political Science 110

15 April 2024

Evaluation of the US Party System

Throughout the United States of America's tenure as a country, the debate on our two-party system in politics has been one of ruthless debate and controversy. Political parties offer a safe space for like-minded individuals to gather and make decisions based on a shared ideology. On the other hand, the political system of having parties offers an endless debate about those who don't feel fully associated with the party they vote for, which is misrepresentation at its finest. With all the controversy in the air, this paper will discuss the reasons why the United States of America's party system allows for more organized spending throughout our government, the balance and upholding of democracy, and broader representation among groups.

One of the benefits of parties in politics is the more precise and organized spending of tax dollars. Parties are institutions, which are vehicles for allocating resources that align with said party's agenda and favor. In one research paper, the author said, "Drawing on a full century of data on party competition and spending, as well as data on health, literacy, and prosperity through 2010, is the central importance of two-party competition to the rise of the American state and the flourishing of the American people" (Knispel 2023). In other words, as politics achieves higher levels of competence through its parties, the better off the American people are because of the allocation of spending that they provide. This spending not only helps pass bills and policies, it also contributes to helping mobilize voters, conduct campaigns, and provide for party

organization throughout all levels of government. For many voters, the administration of their tax dollars is of the utmost importance. The party organization handles different policies and bills with differentiation priority, thus administering the money to push for certain agendas or aspects they would like to see changed for the benefit of their party. This is a perfect example of a collective action problem; This factor goes to show why most changes are made within the first 100 days of a new party in office. This permits voters to check in on their elected officials to see what changes they are making to bills and regulations within our government. These reasons help our government distribute resources.

In addition, political parties maintain balance within our democracy. One author wrote in a research paper, “Political parties remain critical to organizing democracy but they are beleaguered” (De Witte 2023). The fact of the matter is that the parties we esteem and vote for are essential to preserve the organization of our democracy. Parties are means to an end, with the end being a successful government that both governs the people and itself, to paraphrase the words of one of our Founding Fathers. Parties are the perfect mediator between the government and the citizens. It is a mechanism that allows citizens to hold their government officials accountable as well as forces the citizens to be involved in government from its officials. It is the perfect balance because the party can persuade its party in the electorate to a superior form of government meanwhile the electorate can vote for another party that better aligns with their ideology. This mediating power that parties hold allows for better representation among the majority, especially the median voter. These reasons sanction balance within our democracy to uphold everything the Founding Fathers had envisioned our country to be.

To dive deeper, the parties in politics share a unique position of representation. As I have learned in class, there are many forms of representation between the principal and the agent. Parties empower a broader encompassment between differentiating people in our country. In our day and age, parties help unite what seems to be a very polarizing and divided people. To name just a few, parties help combat coordination problems, unstable coalitions, and principal-agent problems. These issues all stem from the certitude of a divisive people. If it were not for parties to help knit like-minded ideologies together, our country would be in total dismay. To prove this point, an author commented on the Founding Fathers and the Federalist Papers, saying, “In a big nation, many competing interests would naturally appear, and it would be much harder for any given “factions leader” to rise to power” (Valsania, 2023). The author is summarizing the need for parties to oppose anarchy within government. Parties encircle a somewhat split humankind to live in accord.

Some might counter that same quote by our Founding Fathers saying that political parties are indeed factions themselves. Or that parties drive the polarization we see today in modern politics. In a class lecture, Professor Dynes commented on the following, “We’ll be more tolerant of incompetent and power-abusing agents who are in our party” (Dynes 2024). All this points towards an expressive partisanship and the problems that lie within. The social identity theory plays a vital role in the polarization within our current politics. Voters relying on cognitive biases and system 1 thinking are prone to have a shift in creating a mega-identity partisanship and a hatred of any party with opposed beliefs. Although these arguments have some validity, if you take an instrumental partisanship approach to politics, and use system 2 thinking to govern your beliefs and ideology, you are well on your way to becoming an informed voter and agent. Believing the narrative that you have to vote for the party you belong to just because or that you

should decline the bills the other party is actively trying to pass just because is a terrible seed of corruption. As Thomas Paine once said, “The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion” (Robin, 2010).

In conclusion, it is inherent to see the glass half full in terms of political parties within our government. The party system in the United States of America plays a vital role in more organized distribution of the country’s resources, upholding the democracy that was set before this great country, and a more inclusive representation for the majority. While parties are at the forefront of debate and unrest, it is important to not overlook the crucial benefits and contributions of these institutions within politics.

Works Cited

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