

Political Parties

Helpful or harmful to American Politics?

PRO

Political parties ensure election of better qualified candidates

FRANCES HATHCOCK
EDITORIAL WRITER

Government requires a system of checks and balances to keep order. Political parties play a major role in this system, and they are an inevitable part of America's representative government. Their influence and support (or lack thereof) of the government can make or break many elections and legislations.

Parties help group the opinions and beliefs of Americans into two main groups: the Democrats, the left wing, and the Republicans, the right wing. However, there are candidates from other parties allowed in elections, such as the Green Party, the Communist Party, and voters supporting Independent candidates. Political parties are not only a major part of our government, they also are a necessary component of any international government.

"Political parties in the United States are necessary because of the structure of our government," Advanced Placement U.S. History teacher Jon Elfner said.

A large portion of the structure of the government is representative, so political parties work towards elections,

different legislatures, or different ideals. By taking the values and views of many voters, political parties can consolidate power and pool ideas, resources, and funds, as well as act on the behalf of their numerous members. Political platforms are used to address controversial and important issues at hand.

The prevention of potential political tyranny is also made possible by political parties and their supporters. Totalitarian, dictatorship, and fascist governments can be prevented by allowing a two- or multi-party system in the government. Because the voters have the ultimate say in who is elected into political offices, the only way that these governments could obtain office is if there is a sudden uprising in their voting population, forming a new political party, or reviving an old one. This is unlikely due to past experiences with these governments and the effects they had on the international public and the unrest in the countries that have these governments today.

"By creating two parties, the balance of power is regulated between the two sides," Elfner said.

As necessary as political parties are, it is important that current and future

voters, such as H-F students, remember that political parties are only one aspect of an election. Candidates and their views on current issues should be the more prominent deciding factors in election voting rather than what political party the candidates belong to.

"Voters get too wrapped up in the political parties during election time and do not focus on the candidates and their platforms like they should be focusing on," Junior Story Pumphrey said.

In recent years, due to the extreme

polarity of the Republican and Democratic parties, political parties have been labeled as destructive and unnecessary. However, if the politicians and other political party supporters work together to take the excessive contrast off of the two parties, then political parties would be seen as the necessity that they are and lose their negative reputation.

It also would be easier to focus more on the real issues at hand during election or legislation time instead of what the major political parties are campaigning.

AMERICA VOTES 2004 Election Results ELECTORAL VOTES



POPULAR VOTE
Republican Party: 62,040,606 Votes
Democratic Party: 59,028,109 Votes
Independent Parties: 411,304 Votes

CON

Political parties cause unnecessary conflict

JULIE CARLISLE
EDITORIAL EDITOR

After September 11, Americans united through common feelings of anger and sadness. Many Americans were less concerned with the differences between themselves and other Americans; U.S. citizens were more focused on seeking revenge on the terrorists that organized the attack. As a result, the country experienced a period of strong nationalism.

Five years later, that sense of nationalism has vanished. Rifts again have formed between Americans, especially between the Democratic and Republican parties.

Since our country's founding, political parties have opposed each other on many issues, and lately, it seems that these two parties argue even more than usual on a variety of issues, including the War in Iraq, abortion, gay marriage, and taxes.

Some will argue that political parties are good for the government because they ensure that qualified and popular candidates are elected into office, and these elected officials are able to make

decisions that reflect the beliefs of most of their voters. However, political parties cause conflict between Americans because members of both the Republican and Democratic parties strongly oppose each other, which often leads to needless argument and hostility.

"Many people will argue that political parties are harmful because members of Congress often vote for things that their parties want, instead of what they believe in. The parties are not very respectful

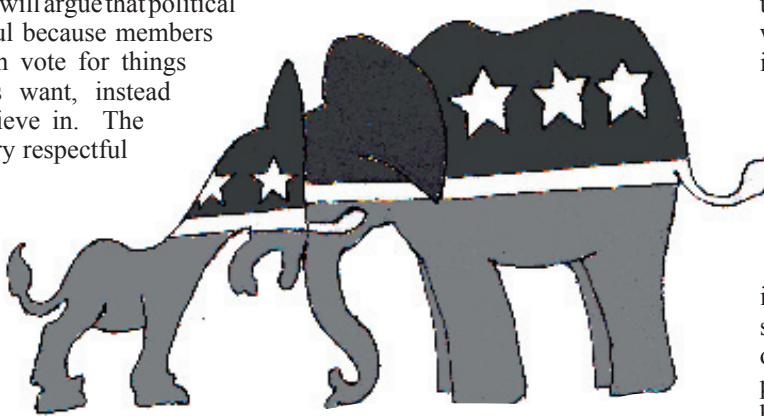
of each other, and members will often resort to harsh and immature language when speaking to or about members of the opposite party,"

Advanced Placement Government and Politics teacher Paul Kolimas said.

The Republican and Democratic parties seem to oppose each other on almost every controversial issue. While the stances that political parties take usually reflect philosophies that each

party stands for, they make it difficult for voters to "pick a team" when it comes to elections.

Voting for one party often means encouraging something that the party stands for that the voter does not



necessarily support. For example, a voter may support the War in Iraq, an issue opposed by the Democratic Party, but oppose eliminating abortion, which many advocates for the Republican Party hope to do. This leaves the voter in a situation where they must weigh

which issue is more important to them. Without political parties, voters would not have to make such decisions.

According to Kolimas, when America's founding fathers originally framed the Constitution, they were very suspicious of political parties because they thought that the separate factions would look out for their personal interests and would not worry about the benefit of the country as a whole.

While America should not banish the political party system, the framers of the Constitution were justified in their worry.

American politics is centered around conflict because people in opposing parties are constantly squabbling because of their different opinions, creating a needlessly hostile political environment. Members of both political parties should look to find common ground. They should be more worried about solving America's problems instead of scoring political points. Politicians and party members should aim to ignore long standing differences and work to achieve the nationalism that was established after the fateful day of September 11.