

American Democracy and the Civic Spirit
Preparing for the New Century

Civic:

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AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND THE CIVIC SPIRIT
Preparing for the Next Century

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*American Democracy and the Civic Spirit
Preparing for the New Century*

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PART ONE. MAKING THE MOST OF ELECTIONS

Chapter 1. You Can't Vote in Other People's Districts Term Limits As Anti-Democratic

Elections are fundamental to the consent process in American democracy. There is much more, but the electoral process is indispensable.

It is natural, therefore, when things are not going well to give greater attention to elections: to qualifications of candidates, to election campaigns and their finance, to performance of elected officials, to the length of the terms they serve.

And so it is today that some Americans are so dissatisfied with the workings of government that they want to limit the number of terms which elected officials may serve, especially members of Congress and state legislatures.

A fellow of this persuasion revealed a major motivation when he said to me, "I wish I could vote in other districts." Of course, you can't do that legally. So if you don't like who voters in other districts are electing, what do you do? You try to limit their choice.

That's exactly what advocates of term limits are attempting to do. They are mostly outsiders wanting to limit the choice of voters in districts they can't control. They are joined by others who have backed losing candidates in their own districts and want to change the rules to nullify competition. As such, the term-limit movement is anti-democratic both in spirit and intent.

Democracy is sovereignty of the people. Where members of legislative bodies are chosen by

districts, it is up to the people of that district, and they alone, to decide who they want to represent them. If they are satisfied with an incumbent, they should be entitled to reelect her or him as many times as they choose. If they are dissatisfied, they can vote her or him out of office. The only limit should be length of term, not number of terms.

FOUNDERS' INTENT

This reflects the intent of the founders of the United States of America. They had more than enough of outsiders telling them what they could do or couldn't do. They were tired of the king and a distant Parliament in which they had no representation making laws for them and levying taxes.

The founders insisted that the people are sovereign and must be able to choose their own representatives. They declared independence, stressing the importance of "the consent of the governed", and they adopted their own constitution.

*The framers of the U.S. Constitution realized that direct democracy, as epitomized by the New England town meeting, was unworkable for a large territory, so they established a system of representative democracy (which they referred to as a "republic"). Such a government, James Madison explained in *The Federalist* No. 39,*

is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior.

Then he insisted:

It is essential to such a government that it be derived from the general body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it.¹

¹ *The Federalist*, No. 39. pp. 243-44.

Based upon this reasoning, the framers limited length of terms but not number of terms an incumbent could serve. Thus, the U.S. Constitution specifies a two year term for U.S. representatives, a four year term for the president of the United States, and a six year term for U.S. senators. (Federal judges have life tenure in order to assure an independent judiciary.)

The original U.S. Constitution placed no restriction on the voters' right to re-elect office holders as often as they like. Or if they choose, voters can bring an end to an incumbent's service at the end of any term. This decision is left to the voters in each congressional district and in each state for senators.

This arrangement stood for 164 years until ratification of the 22nd Amendment in 1951 to limit the president to two terms. In circumstances similar to today's term-limit movement, conservatives were upset because they couldn't defeat Franklin D. Roosevelt in four successive presidential elections. Although Roosevelt was dead, their reprisal was the 22nd Amendment. (Ironically the only two presidents since then who served two full terms and might have gone for a third were Republicans Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan.)

DESIRE TO CHANGE THE RULES

In our own era conservatives have been quite successful in presidential elections but less successful in congressional elections and in many state legislatures. They have been unable to put forward candidates and programs that gain majority support in numerous congressional and state legislative districts. In some localities, though, it is liberals who aren't able to persuade a majority of voters to support their choice to replace incumbents. Some of them are as frustrated as the

conservatives.

So what do they do? They try to change the rules of the game to bring about a result that they cannot achieve in competitive politics. They seek to limit the number of terms that incumbents may serve. In doing so, they are attempting to short-circuit the democratic process by passing laws that take away the voters' choice.

Though mostly unspoken, there is also an element of racism. Many long-term state legislators and U.S. representatives are African Americans and Hispanics who have risen to top positions in state legislatures and Congress. They have power based upon seniority. Term-limit advocates want them dislodged. It's another case of white anglos wanting to limit the opportunity of African Americans and Hispanics to choose their own representatives.

Changing the rules by enacting term limits is like deciding during a baseball game, when the opposing pitcher hasn't allowed a hit, that no pitcher may pitch more than four innings. Or it's like saying that no player can play more than 100 consecutive games so that other players may have a chance. Tell that to Cal Ripken with his 1,7xx consecutive game streak at the end of the 1992 baseball season and to the million+ baseball fans who gave him the highest vote on the 1992 all star ballot.

It really makes no sense to arbitrarily remove someone from a position solely on the basis of years served. As long as Kareem Abdul Jabbar could play good basketball, the Los Angeles Lakers had a place for him. Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron were hitting homeruns when most baseball players their age had retired, and Nolan Ryan was still pitching and throwing no-hitters in his forties. And

notice how popular Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Lee Trevino are on the senior golf circuit.

Ability to perform is the key, not number of years of service. For the occasional representative who gets reelected while too frail to serve adequately or who is proven to be corrupt and still gets reelected, there are thousands more whose long experience is a treasure for American democracy. By having limits on length of individual terms, but not on the total number, voters have a regular opportunity to determine how long elected officials will serve. The choice rests with the people in each district, not what some outsiders determine. That's the way it should be in a representative democracy.

BETTER REMEDIES

To be sure, a lot of people are frustrated with governmental performance these days. They include many who have not been politically active but are awakening and want to overcome their neglect. Term-limit advocates are seeking to channel this frustration into blame for long-time office holders.

Such frustration is understandable because government isn't doing too well in solving some seemingly intractable problems. But this failure is not necessarily the fault of persons who have held legislative office for a long time. Newcomers to state legislatures and Congress share responsibility. So do governors, many with limited terms, and the president of the United States, who is limited to two terms. Also many governmental bureaucracies, like those of numerous other large organizations, are bogged down in redtape and are too unresponsive to citizen concerns. Another contributing factor is that we citizens lack consensus on some crucial issues and therefore do not give

our representatives clear instructions for what we want done.

There are better remedies than limiting the number of terms. One of the most readily available is to change incumbents district by district. This happened in the 1992 election season for ___ seats out of the 435 of the U.S. House of Representatives because of retirement or defeat at the polls. This was the highest turnover in __ years. Many state legislatures had exceptionally high turnover, too.

With the 1992 elections over, citizens can and should concentrate on keeping incumbents alert to what they the citizenry expects of them. Chapter 3 discusses how to do this.

In 1994 voters will have another opportunity to replace other incumbents if they are dissatisfied. Or to reelect them. The next chapter offers ideas on how to enter the electoral competition, and later chapters dealing with campaigning.

This is democracy the old-fashion way. You compete. You work hard in election campaigns and earn your results. You don't restrain voter choice.

Furthermore, there are numerous opportunities to engage in continuous, interactive consent-giving after the election is over. Part Two of this book discusses these opportunities.

SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE

Although using the rhetoric of democracy, the term-limit movement at its core is undemocratic. It reflects a deep distrust of the citizenry by restricting people's choice of whom to represent them. In effect term-limit advocates want to vote in districts other than their own. This is

contrary to democracy as the sovereignty of the people, a concept applicable district by district, state by state.

To be sure, "throw the rascals out" is an ancient sentiment in American democracy. But in our own district, we often realize that the incumbent is "our rascal" and we like him or her. Our representative has helped us when we have had problems with the bureaucracy. The longer he or she has been in office, the more clout he or she has.

Moreover, over the years our representative has honed his or her policy positions to reflect majority opinion in the district. If he or she strays too far from district opinion, we'll replace him or her. This is consent of the governed in action. It's our consent to give or take away, not what some outsiders want. Every two years (four or six for some offices) we can terminate an incumbent's office-holding, or we can choose to continue his or her service for another term.

This is applied sovereignty of the people which these outsiders, the term-limit advocates, want to take away. Let's stick with democracy!

September 24, 1992

YOU CAN'T VOTE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S DISTRICTS
Why Term Limits Are Anti-Democratic

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A fellow of conservative persuasion said to me, "I wish I could vote in other districts." Of course, you can't do that legally.

So if you don't like who voters in other districts are electing, what do you do? You try to limit their choice.

That's exactly what advocates of term limits are attempting to do these days. They are mostly outsiders wanting to limit the choice of voters in districts they can't control. They are joined by others who have backed losing candidates in their own districts and want to change the rules to nullify competition. As such, the term-limit movement is anti-democratic both in spirit and intent.

Democracy is sovereignty of the people. Where members of legislative bodies are chosen by districts, it is up to the people of that district, and they alone, to decide who they want to represent them. If they are satisfied with an incumbent, they should be entitled to reelect him or her as many times as they choose. The only limit should be length of term, not number of terms. This reflects the intent of the founders of the United States of America. They had had more than enough of outsiders telling them what they could do or couldn't do. They were tired of the king and a

distant Parliament in which they had no representation making laws for them and levying taxes.

The founders insisted that the people are sovereign and must be able to choose their own representatives. They declared independence and adopted their own constitution.

Although neither the Declaration of Independence nor the Constitution of the United States uses the term "democracy", there is no better description of democracy than the Declaration's formulation of the why and wherefore of government:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Who?</i> | <i>The people</i> |
| <i>How?</i> | <i>through their consent</i> |
| <i>Do what?</i> | <i>institute government</i> |
| <i>Why?</i> | <i>to secure inalienable rights</i> |
| <i>Which ones?</i> | <i>life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness</i> |
| <i>For whom?</i> | <i>equally for all persons</i> |

The framers of the U.S. Constitution realized that direct democracy, as epitomized by the New England town meeting, was unworkable for a large territory, so they established a system of representative democracy. They called it a "republic".

In explaining this concept, James Madison indicated that

we may define a republic to be....a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people.

This picks up the Declaration's idea of government derived from the consent of the governed.

Such a government, Madison continued,

is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior.

Then he insisted:

It is essential to such a government that it be derived from the general body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it.¹

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Such frustration is understandable because government isn't doing too well in solving some seemingly intractable problems. But this failure is not necessarily the fault of persons who have held elective office for a long time. Some newcomers to elective office share responsibility. So do governmental bureaucracies which, like those of numerous other large organizations, are bogged down in redtape and are too unresponsive to citizen concerns. Another contributing factor is that we citizens lack consensus on some crucial issues and therefore do not give our representatives clear instructions for what we want done.

There are better remedies than limiting the number of terms. One of the most readily available is to change incumbents district by district. And this is happening in the 1992 election as more than 100 of the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives will not return because of retirement or defeat at the polls.

Although using the rhetoric of democracy, the term-limit movement at its core is undemocratic. It reflects a deep distrust of the citizenry by restricting people's choice of whom to represent them. In effect term-limit advocates want to vote in districts other than their own. This is contrary to democracy as the sovereignty of the people, a concept applicable district by district, state by state.

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September 7, 1992

Chapter 2. You Can't Beat Somebody with Nobody How to Become A Candidate for Election

These days the term-limit movement has arisen in the United States as an expression of frustration with governmental performance. Advocates blame long-time incumbents in Congress and the state legislatures and seek to displace them by limiting how long they may serve. But this goes against sovereignty of the people by restricting the choice of voters in each district to elect their own representatives and to reelect them as long as they like.

For persons dissatisfied with present officeholders, a better way to achieve change is through the electoral process that graces American democracy with regularity. This can produce results much quicker because most term-limit proposals won't take effect for eight to twelve years.

If you want to succeed in defeating incumbents up for reelection, you should heed the old political adage, "You can't be somebody with nobody."

The same holds true for seats in Congress, state legislatures, and other elective offices that are opening because of death, resignation, retirement (sometimes to seek another office), or term limits where they apply. If you don't care for potential candidates interested in these open seats, remember that "you can't be somebody with nobody."

Find a candidate you can support, or run yourself. Enter the rough-and-tumble of politics. Compete. This is the true spirit of American democracy. It's harder but is far superior to arbitrarily impeding voter choice, the lazy and anti-democratic approach of term-limit advocates.

ELECTION CYCLE

Elections in the United States occur on slowly revolving stages, or some might say, on merry-go-rounds. The stages revolve at different speeds. Some complete the cycle in a year. Some take two, four, and six years to revolve.

A cycle is completed the day that voters step on stage to cast their vote in the general election. They may have also been on stage on primary election day. After the general election the election cycle starts another round.

For several weeks or a few months before the vote occurs, the stage is occupied by candidates and campaign workers, busily scurrying about, calling out to the audience of potential voters. Before that a smaller group of actors are involved in pre-campaign activities as candidates, aided by a few advisors, prepare to announce their intent to run. Before that potential candidates are busy

positioning themselves to seek public office. The stage is uncrowded then, but it is never completely empty at any time in the annual, biennial, or quadrennial cycle.

The day after the general election the stage continues revolving. Newly elected persons and reelected incumbents start positioning themselves to run again. Potential challengers move on stage to establish their position. Some ambitious persons stay on stage for several election cycles in a long-term quest for office.

Pictorially the stage (or the merry-go-round) is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Electoral Process on a Revolving Stage

Election laws demarcate different sections of the revolving stage. They specify filing deadlines and election days. They indicate the time for official caucuses, primary elections, and conventions. Each of these events brings people on stage: caucus and convention delegates, voters in primary and general elections.

The ones who succeed in winning nomination and election are usually those who have been on stage long before the event occurs. That's an important piece of knowledge for dissatisfied spectators who want to see different kinds of candidates when the revolving stage moves into the campaign period. To bring about change, these spectators must become actors on stage early in the election cycle.

Getting on Stage

How do candidates get on stage? What do they do? When do they do it? If you want to become a candidate yourself, how do you get involved?

These days in American politics most aspirants for public office are **self-selected**. They make their own personal decision to run. Their motives are as complex and as varied as human nature, combining a quest for self-interest and a concern for others. They are self-seekers but also perceive themselves as public servants. In preparation for running, they often make a careful effort to **position** themselves well ahead of the formal nominating process.

There are, however, instances in which a **selection committee** from a political party, a caucus within a party, or an outside advocacy organization will **screen** candidates for elective office. They may look at persons who are already positioning themselves to run, but on occasion they will reach out to **recruit** and **groom** certain individuals for the next election, or the one thereafter.

In rare instances a committee of citizens might call upon an established community leader and convince her or him to step out of private life into the rough and tumble of politics. But a true **draft** of a previously uninterested person is quite unusual, although the appearance of drafting is sometimes staged.

Sometimes a party, a caucus, or an advocacy organization puts forward a **slate** of candidates seeking nomination in the primary election for a set of related offices, such all of city council or the state legislative districts within the county. Occasionally individual candidates for parallel offices (such as adjacent council or legislative seats) join together to compose a slate, especially in the primary election.

Newcomers to politics can benefit from the experience of seasoned politicians in how to go about positioning, screening, recruiting, grooming, and slating. These are processes that occur when the electoral stage has few occupants and the voter-spectators are paying little attention.

WHICH OFFICE?

The first question an aspirant for elective office must answer is: which office to seek? In the United States there are xxx,xxx popular elective offices to choose from, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Popular Elected Offices in the United States, 1987.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| NATIONAL | 537 |
| President, vice president | 2 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Senators | 100 |
| Representatives | 435 |
| STATES AND TERRITORIES | x,xxx |
| Governors, lieutenant governors | |
| Other executive officials | |
| Legislators | |
| Judges | |
| LOCAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT | xx,xxx |
| Chief executives | |
| Other executive officials | |
| Legislators | |
| Judges | |
| OTHER JURISDICTIONS | xx,xxx |
| School boards | |
| GRAND TOTAL | xxx,xxx |

The president, members of Congress, and governors receive the most national media coverage but mayors, county executives, state legislators, city and county council members get plenty of attention in their home localities. Other officeholders are less in the news on a regular basis. But regardless of publicity, all popular elected offices are worthy of pursuit.

Some persons move through a series of offices. For instance, Jimmy Carter was a county school board member (1955-62) and a state senator (1963-67) while engaged in the peanut business, then governor of Georgia (1971-75) before become president of the United States (1977-81). Most members of Congress previously held state or local elective office. xx members of the U.S. Senate were previously members of the House of Representatives, and xx were governors [data to be completed after 1992 election]. Typically mayors and county executives have previously served on the city or county council.

Although some persons disparage "career" politicians, American democracy is well-served by the system that provides initial experience in elective office near to home and then broadens to wider arenas. We're better off by this kind of career development instead of relying on raw amateurs placed in high office without understanding of the issues and the political process.

It is a method widely and successfully used in other endeavors. For instance, among the

members of baseball's Hall of Fame, only pitcher Bob Feller started his professional career on a major league team. All others of these greatest players had minor league experience [needs further checking]. In business corporations chief executive officers work their way to the top, except for company founders. When the founders want to groom their sons and daughters to succeed them, they assign them a variety of jobs: on the production line, in sales, in lower and middle management.

Learning through practical experience prepares individuals for more challenging tasks in sports, business, and public office.

POSITIONING

Some persons suddenly get an urge to run for elective office and plunge right in. Most candidates, however, go through a positioning process in preparation for running. For many this is quite purposeful. Others come to realize that their involvement in various community activities for its own sake has prepared them for the quest for elective office. The plungers, too, usually have a background in civic or business activities that provide pertinent experience for their candidacy.

Commonality. Positioning occurs not only in the quest for public office but also in other arenas where elections take place.

Potential candidates position themselves for election to class offices and student council in high school and college; as officers of service clubs, women's organizations, lodges, veterans organizations, and professional associations; in civic associations and cause-oriented organizations. The practice also occurs in religious denominations which elect bishops and other top officers. There you can observe persons positioning themselves years in advance and then becoming engaged in informal and formal campaigning as election time approaches.

To be sure in all of these arenas, persons are sometimes sought out to become candidates for positions they haven't pursued or nominated without their consent. These are exceptions, often quite valuable ones, but the general practice of positioning prevails.

Entering the political arena. Persons seeking public office for the first time can learn a lot from successful politicians about positioning.

Practices vary among types of political systems. Thus, where one party is overwhelming dominant and is tightly-controlled by a party boss or a small group of leaders, a potential candidate either has to gain their approval or mount a vigorous opposition campaign within the party. But where the party has several competing factions or caucuses, potential candidates can seek a favorable position with one of them, or if possible, gain the backing of two or more factions. Where two vigorous parties compete for the independent vote, candidates can benefit from developing a wide

base of support beyond party regulars in order to show potentially broad appeal in the general election.

Geographic spread is another factor. It ranges from the intimate setting of ward and local council district to the entire state for gubernatorial and U.S. senatorial candidates (and the whole nation for the presidency). The closer to home the more personalized positioning is while in the wider arena the positioner gives more attention to influential political leaders and organizations representing major blocs of voters.

You position yourself by joining organizations, doing things, making friends, forming alliances, seeking publicity, and gaining recognition.

Name recognition. Some persons start with the benefit of name recognition, derived from athletics, television, business achievement, or prominent family. For example, U.S. Senator Bill Bradley from New Jersey was a basketball star at Princeton and with the New York Knicks. Representative Fred Grandy of Iowa was known through the television series, "Love Boat". Former Governor George Romney of Michigan was president of American Motors Company before he ran for political office. In Massachusetts members of the Kennedy family have had an advantage. The same phenomenon occurs in local elections.

Although name recognition opens doors, it doesn't automatically get you through the passageway to nomination. You still have to build support and work hard to win. Thus, Senator Bradley was active in the New Jersey Democratic Party while he was playing for the Knicks. When Fred Grandy graduated from college, he was an aid to an Iowa congressman before embarking on a theatrical career. He reentered the political scene in Iowa by learning farm issues and intensive campaigning. Governor Romney participate in the Michigan Republican Party prior to running for elective office. A succession of Kennedys -- Jack, Ted, Joe (as their constituents called them) -- went door-to-door and spoke at countless gatherings. They paid their dues.

Getting known. Even if you lack immediate name recognition, you can develop a favorable reputation in the district where you want to run. If you are trying to build support within a party, caucus, or advocacy organization, you can take on tasks that many volunteers undertake, such as stuffing envelopes, handing out leaflets, making phone calls, attending rallies to add to crowd size. You can join committees to work on issues and plan tactics. You can serve on the staff of an elected official. To become better known, you can go out as a speaker, write letters to the editor, place phone calls to talk-in programs and appear on one yourself as you gain some publicity.

You can go beyond party and caucus by initiating civic endeavors, such as collecting food and clothing for the needy, organizing neighborhood cleanup, starting a mentor program for disadvantaged boys, forming a girls club. You can become active and take leadership roles in

nonpolitical organizations, such as church or synagogue, parent teacher association, service club, women's civic group, veterans organization. Doing so provides contacts, offers visibility, and gives you experience in group dynamics and coalition building. The nonpartisan nature of many civic activities can be an asset because it shows you as a public-spirited citizen and not narrowly constricted to one party or a highly-vocal, single-purpose advocacy group.

Persons already holding elective office who want to move to a broader arena -- local to state, state to national -- use various techniques to position themselves to appeal to the broader constituency. They join statewide and national associations. They go outside their locality or state to participate in events where they meet persons from elsewhere and begin to achieve visibility. They serve on committees, speak at political conventions, and sometimes form or join caucuses of like-minded persons. They may support a candidate for a party post or an elective office with the hope that they will receive reciprocal support when they are ready to run for office in this broader domain.

DECIDING WHEN TO RUN

You may decide to undertake several years of positioning before you seek elective office for the first time. Or you may plunge right in without a lot of preliminary effort. In either case, there are a number of questions to ask yourself before deciding what office to run for and when to do so.

- What office do I want to seek? (See Table 1.) What are the district boundaries? (This may affect choice of residence.)
- Can I stand the heat of campaigning? The prospect of invasion of my privacy by the media? Attacks by opponents? Do I have the right temperament for competitive politics?
- Do I want to commit the time required for campaigning and holding public office? (Even a part-time office demands a lot of time, and full-time positions may take 60 to 80 hours a week.)
- Can I afford to work for the salary? (Some salaries for elective officials may seem high, but there are a lot of hidden expenses.)
- How will it affect my family? Possible negative publicity? The long hours I will put in? The possible economic burden?
- Is there a succession of offices for reaching my goal? (Such as, city council member then mayor and perhaps governor; state representative, state senator, governor; attorney general then governor; U.S. representative then senator and maybe president or vice president; or a succession of appointive positions before running for elective office.)
- When will there be an opening -- at the next election or a subsequent one? (Because of term limit, announced intent of incumbent not to seek reelection, prospect that he or she will be running for another office.)
- If the incumbent is likely to seek reelection, what are my prospects? If she or he is from the opposite party, can I win my party's nomination? If from my party, should I challenge

the incumbent in the primary?

- *Even if the incumbent seems assured of reelection, should I run to raise issues or to build initial support for a second try?*
- *Who can I get to support me? What individuals, caucuses, organizations?*
- *Who else is interested in running? What are their strengths and weaknesses, support and public appeal? How do I compare?*
- *What opposition will I face from elements within my party or from advocacy organizations involved in electoral politics?*
- *Should I form a slate with candidates for parallel offices? (Such as other legislative districts.)*
- *What are my chances of winning -- excellent, fair, poor? How can I improve my chance? (Sometimes you won't know until you try.)*

For many potential candidates the positioning period offers an opportunity to consider the affects on family and to think about the hard work of campaigning and holding public office. It provides a chance to compare oneself with possible opponents in a primary election and to assess prospects for winning the general election.

If you contemplate running for elective office but discover enough negatives, you may decide not to stand for election now, and perhaps never. Or you may conclude that you have the desire to run and announce your candidacy.

In this manner the positioning process works as a self-screening method for individuals. For candidates who go ahead with the quest, it is the first step in running for elective office.

SELECTION COMMITTEES

In earlier periods in American politics, selection of nominees by a small group within the party (regulars or opposition) was more common than it is today. For instance, in 1946 a group of conservative Republicans in the 12th Congressional District of California was seeking a candidate to run against the liberal incumbent, Democrat Jerry Voorhis. They ran an ad in the newspaper but didn't favor any who applied. They asked Dr. Walker Drexler, former president of Whittier College to run. He declined but suggested a Whittier graduate, who was a superb debater: Richard Nixon, at the time living in Maryland and completing a term of service in the U.S. Navy. They contacted Nixon. He readily accepted and began his political career by defeating Voorhis.¹

In 1948 in Michigan's 5th Congressional District a group calling themselves the Home Front Republicans wanted to challenge the Republican incumbent, an ally of the state Republican "boss" they

¹ William L. Roper, *Winning Politics*. Radnor, Pa.: Chilton Book Co., 1978. p.10.

were fighting. In a district where about half the voters were Dutch, they wanted someone who was or looked Dutch. With that in mind they recruited Gerald Ford, a young lawyer and Navy veteran, well known in those parts as a football star at Michigan University. He defeated the incumbent in the Republican primary and was in his 13th term in Congress when President Nixon appointed him vice-president to replace Spiro Agnew, who had resigned under pressure.²

[Add a Democratic example]

Outright recruitment still occurs these days in districts where no candidates are forthcoming to taken on a seemingly entrenched incumbent. And sometimes a state or national party unit will work with local party members to find a strong candidate to take on a presumed vulnerable incumbent of the other party. But more typically selection committees, where they function, perceive their task as screening persons who have indicated their interest in running and endorsing one of them.

A selection committee might be set up by political party officials or by a faction within the party opposed to party leadership. It might be a committee from a caucus that brings together African Americans, Hispanics, women, or other population groups. Sometimes it is a gathering of representatives of several such groups. It can also be a committee from an interest group (labor, business) or an ideological group (such as conservatives, Christian fundamentalists, moderates, liberals, libertarians) that functions outside the party organization.

Whatever its political orientation, the selection committee seeks a consensus on which candidate to back in the primary election or convention. The intent is to avoid dividing the vote of party regulars or caucus members, thereby allowing a candidate with a different orientation to prevail.

The selection committee is likely to discover that some persons have already announced their candidacy. Others are still in the positioning phase but pass the word through party or caucus connections that they are interested. The selection committee might interview them, talk to others about them, and decide which candidate to endorse in the primary election or at the convention. Now and then the selection committee will be dissatisfied with all announced candidates and will reach out to recruit someone else.

This process may not eliminate other candidates, for some persons are determined to run with or without party or caucus endorsement. But it is an effort to narrow the field and enhance the chances of the party's or caucus's favorite candidate.

² *Op. cit.*, pp.11-12.

Reform groups and newly formed caucuses which want to defeat an incumbent or to win an open seat will find that their chance is increased by agreeing upon a candidate who seems to have the best chance of winning and by discouraging other candidates of similar persuasion from dividing the vote.

This need not be a contemporary version of the discredited "smoked-filled room" approach (the back room out of public view where party bosses picked candidates). A selection committee can be democratically selected within the caucus or reform group. It can have open proceedings (and these are likely to require no smoking). It can report back to a larger body for affirmation. Furthermore, this is only an early phase of the electoral process. Ultimately voters will decide in the primary and general elections.

PUBLIC BENEFITS

Individuals positioning themselves to run for political office are motivated by personal ambition and a desire for public service. Political party units, caucuses, and interest groups screen candidates and endorse one in hopes of winning. It's a competitive process that has public benefits.

As potential candidates position themselves, party leaders and other political activists observe them, note what they do and what they say, judge their accomplishments and their character, and consider whether they are appropriate candidates for public office. Unsuitable candidates to whom voters aren't likely to consent are screened out or encouraged to modify their positions and their mode of operation. Those who don't suffer defeat at the polls. Many strive but few are chosen.

Positioning functions as an early part of the consent of the governed. Prospective candidates, seeking recognition and staking out positions on public issues, interact with the public. Learning what the public thinks on particular issues, they may tailor their positions to reflect majority opinion. They may also educate the public on new ideas and learn how to advance unpopular views in a manner that will gain support. This exchange can have an effect on future policy decisions.

The positioning period is an opportunity for advocacy groups to gain support for their positions from potential candidates before they have taken a public stand on particular issues. This kind of early involvement enables advocacy groups to make advantageous connections that they can intensify when formal campaign begins. It lays the groundwork for future lobbying of those who are elected.

Incumbents positioning themselves for reelection keep in constituents and track public opinion. This influences the votes of legislators and the policy decisions of elected executives. Lobbyists offer election support to incumbents they favor. All of this is a manifestation of the interactive nature of the consent process, occurring continuously.

Accordingly, what happens on the revolving electoral stage where positioning and other pre-campaign activities occur early in the election cycle is as much a part of the consent of the governed as election day. Numerous public policy decisions are affected by the positioning process.

So even if you're not a candidate for election, give attention to those who are or who seem to have this ambition. Try to influence them in the early phase when their positions are fluid. All campaign commitments aren't observed, but many are. Thus, interaction with positioners and announced candidates is a worthy endeavor.

And don't forget, "you can't beat somebody with nobody!"

Chapter 2. You Can't Beat Somebody with Nobody How to Become A Candidate for Election

These days the term-limit movement has arisen in the United States as an expression of frustration with governmental performance. Advocates blame long-time incumbents in Congress and the state legislatures and seek to displace them by limiting how long they may serve. But this goes against sovereignty of the people by restricting the choice of voters in each district to elect their own representatives and to reelect them as long as they like.

For persons dissatisfied with present officeholders, a better way to achieve change is through the electoral process that graces American democracy with regularity. This can produce results much quicker because most term-limit proposals won't take effect for eight to twelve years.

If you want to succeed in defeating incumbents up for reelection, you should heed the old political adage, "You can't beat somebody with nobody."

The same holds true for seats in Congress, state legislatures, and other elective offices that are opening because of death, resignation, retirement (sometimes to seek another office), or term limits where they apply. If you don't care for potential candidates interested in these open seats, remember that "you can't beat somebody with nobody."

Find a candidate you can support, or run yourself. Enter the rough-and-tumble of politics. Compete. This is the true spirit of American democracy. It's harder but is far superior to arbitrarily impeding voter choice, the lazy and anti-democratic approach of term-limit advocates.

ELECTION CYCLE

Elections in the United States occur on slowly revolving stages, or some might say, on merry-go-rounds. The stages revolve at different speeds. Some complete the cycle in a year. Some take two, four, and six years to revolve.

A cycle is completed the day that voters step on stage to cast their vote in the general election. They may have also been on stage on primary election day. After the general election the election cycle starts another round.

For several weeks or a few months before the vote occurs, the stage is occupied by candidates and campaign workers, busily scurrying about, calling out to the audience of potential voters. Before that a smaller group of actors are involved in pre-campaign activities as candidates, aided by a few advisors, prepare to announce their intent to run. Before that potential candidates are busy positioning themselves to seek public office. The stage is uncrowded then, but it is never completely empty at any time in the annual, biennial, or quadrennial cycle.

The day after the general election the stage continues revolving. Newly elected persons and reelected incumbents start positioning themselves to run again. Potential challengers move on stage to establish their position. Some ambitious persons stay on stage for several election cycles in a long-term quest for office.

Pictorially the stage (or the merry-go-round) is shown in Figure 1.

Election laws demarcate different sections of the revolving stage. They specify filing deadlines and election days. They indicate the time for official caucuses, primary elections, and conventions. Each of these events bring people on stage: caucus and convention delegates, voters in primary and

general elections.

The ones who succeed in winning nomination and election are usually those who have been on stage many months before these event occurs: candidates and campaign workers, and even earlier the positions. That's an important piece of knowledge for dissatisfied spectators who want to see different kinds of candidates when the revolving stage moves into the campaign period. To bring

Figure 1. Electoral Process on a Revolving Stage



about change, these spectators must become actors on stage early in the election cycle.

Getting on Stage

How do candidates get on stage? What do they do? When do they do it? If you want to become a candidate yourself, how do you get involved?

*These days in American politics most aspirants for public office are **self-selected**. They make their own personal decision to run. Their motives are as complex and as varied as human nature, combining a quest for self-interest and a concern for others. They are self-seekers but also perceive themselves as public servants. In preparation for running, they often make a careful effort to **position** themselves well ahead of the formal nominating process.*

There are, however, instances in which a **selection committee** from a political party, a caucus within a party, or an outside advocacy organization will **screen** candidates for elective office. They may look at persons who are already positioning themselves to run, but on occasion they will reach out to **recruit** and **groom** certain individuals for the next election, or the one thereafter.

In rare instances a committee of citizens might call upon an established community leader and convince her or him to step out of private life into the political arena. But a true **draft** of a previously uninterested person is quite unusual, although the appearance of drafting is sometimes staged.

Sometimes a party, a caucus, or an advocacy organization puts forward a **slate** of candidates seeking nomination in the primary election for a set of related offices, such as all city council seats or all of the state legislative districts within the county. Occasionally individual candidates for parallel offices (such as adjacent council or legislative seats) join together to compose a slate, especially in the primary election.

Newcomers to politics can benefit from the experience of seasoned politicians in how to go about positioning, screening, recruiting, grooming, and slating. These are processes that occur when the electoral stage has few occupants and voter-spectators are paying little attention.

WHICH OFFICE?

The first question an aspirant for elective office must answer is: which office to seek? In the United States there are 497,155 popularly elected offices to choose from, as shown in Table 1.

The president, members of Congress, and governors receive the most national media coverage

but mayors, county executives, state legislators, city and county council members get plenty of attention in their home localities. Other officeholders are less in the news on a regular basis. But regardless of publicity, all popularly elected offices are worthy of pursuit.

Some persons move through a series of offices. For instance, Jimmy Carter was a county school board member (1955-62) and a state senator

Table 1. Popularly Elected Offices in the United States, 1987.

| | Number of Governments | Elected Officials |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| NATIONAL GOVERNMENT | 1 | 537 |
| President, vice president | | 2 |
| Congress | | 535 |
| STATE GOVERNMENT | 50 | 18,134 |
| Governors, lieutenant governors | | 100 |
| Legislatures | | 7,461 |
| Other elected boards | | 1,300 |
| Other elected officials | | 9,273 |
| COUNTY GOVERNMENTS | 3,042 | 55,500 |
| Governing boards | | 17,014 |
| Other elected boards | | 9,563 |
| Other elected officials | | 28,923 |
| MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS | 19,200 | 137,542 |
| Governing boards | | 106,791 |
| Other elected boards | | 4,179 |
| Other elected officials | | 26,572 |
| TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENTS | 16,691 | 118,669 |
| Governing boards | | 41,390 |
| Other elected boards | | 26,030 |
| Other elected officials | | 51,248 |
| SCHOOL DISTRICTS | 14,721 | 86,772 |
| Governing boards | | 86,015 |
| Other elected officials | | 757 |
| SPECIAL DISTRICTS | 29,531 | 80,538 |
| Governing boards | | 79,190 |
| Other elected officials | | 1,348 |

GRAND TOTAL

83,235

497,155

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Popularly Elected Officials" *1987 Census of Governments, Government Organization*, vol. 1, no. 2. p. 1. Washington: Bureau of the Census, January 1990.

(1963-67) while engaged in the peanut business, then governor of Georgia (1971-75) before becoming president of the United States (1977-81). Most members of Congress previously held state or local elective office. xx members of the U.S. Senate were previously members of the House of Representatives, and xx were governors [data to be completed after 1992 election]. Typically mayors and county executives have previously served on the city or county council.

Although some persons disparage "career" politicians, American democracy is well-served by the system that provides initial experience in elective office near to home and then broadens to wider arenas. We're better off by this kind of career development than relying on a lot of raw amateurs placed in high office without understanding of the issues and the political process.

It is a method widely and successfully used in other endeavors. For instance, among the members of baseball's Hall of Fame, only pitcher Bob Feller started his professional career on a major league team. All others of these greatest players had minor league experience [needs further checking]. In business corporations chief executive officers work their way to the top, except for company founders. When the founders want to groom their sons and daughters to succeed them, they assign them a variety of jobs: on the production line, in sales, in lower and middle management.

Learning through practical experience in entry positions prepares individuals for more challenging tasks in sports, business, and public office.

POSITIONING

Some persons suddenly get an urge to run for elective office and plunge right in. Most candidates, however, go through a positioning process in preparation for running. For many this is

quite purposeful. Others come to realize that their involvement in various community activities for its own sake has prepared them for the quest for elective office. The plungers, too, usually have a background in civic or business activities that provide pertinent experience for their candidacy.

Commonality. Positioning occurs not only in the quest for public office but also in other arenas where elections take place.

Potential candidates position themselves for election to class offices and student council in high school and college; as officers of service clubs, women's organizations, lodges, veterans organizations, and professional associations; in civic associations and cause-oriented organizations. The practice also occurs in religious denominations which elect bishops and other top officers. There you can observe persons positioning themselves years in advance and then becoming engaged in informal and formal campaigning as election time approaches.

To be sure in all of these arenas, persons are sometimes sought out to become candidates for positions they haven't pursued or are nominated without their consent. These are exceptions, often quite valuable ones, but the general practice of positioning prevails.

Entering the political arena. Persons seeking public office for the first time can learn a lot from successful politicians about positioning. Their experience indicates that you position yourself by joining organizations, doing things, making friends, forming alliances, seeking publicity, and gaining recognition.

Practices vary among types of political systems. Thus, where one party is overwhelming dominant and is tightly-controlled by a party boss or a small group of leaders, a potential candidate

either has to gain their approval or mount a vigorous opposition campaign within the party. But where the party has several competing factions or caucuses, potential candidates can seek a favorable position with one of them, or if possible, gain the backing of two or more factions. Where two vigorous parties compete for the independent vote, candidates can benefit from developing a wide base of support beyond party regulars in order to show potentially broad appeal in the general election.

Geographic spread is another factor. It ranges from the intimate setting of ward and local council district to the entire state for gubernatorial and U.S. senatorial candidates (and the whole nation for the presidency). The closer to home the more personalized positioning is while in the wider arena the positioner gives more attention to influential political leaders and organizations representing major blocs of voters.

Name recognition. Some persons start with the benefit of name recognition, derived from athletics, television, business achievement, or prominent family. For example, U.S. Senator Bill Bradley from New Jersey was a basketball star at Princeton and with the New York Knicks. Representative Fred Grandy of Iowa was known through the television series, "Love Boat". Former Governor George Romney of Michigan was president of American Motors Company. In Massachusetts members of the Kennedy family have had an advantage because of their name. The same phenomenon occurs in local elections.

Although name recognition opens doors, it doesn't automatically get you through the passageway to nomination. You still have to build support and work hard to win. Thus, Senator

Bradley was active in the New Jersey Democratic Party while he was playing for the Knicks. After Fred Grandy graduated from college, he was an aide to an Iowa congressman before embarking on a theatrical career. He reentered the political scene in Iowa by learning farm issues and intensive campaigning. Governor Romney participated in the Michigan Republican Party prior to running for elective office. A succession of Kennedys -- Jack, Ted, Joe (as their constituents called them) -- went door-to-door and spoke at countless gatherings. They paid their dues.

Getting known. Even if you lack immediate name recognition, you can develop a favorable reputation in the district where you want to run. If you are trying to build support within a party, caucus, or advocacy organization, you can take on tasks that many volunteers undertake, such as stuffing envelopes, handing out leaflets, making phone calls, attending rallies to add to crowd size. You can join committees to work on issues and plan tactics. You can serve on the staff of an elected official. To become better known, you can go out as a speaker, write letters to the editor, place phone calls to talk-in programs and appear on one yourself as you gain some publicity.

You can go beyond party and caucus by initiating civic endeavors, such as collecting food and clothing for the needy, organizing neighborhood cleanup, starting a mentor program for disadvantaged boys, forming a girls club. You can become active and take leadership roles in nonpolitical organizations, such as church or synagogue, parent teacher association, service club, women's civic group, veterans organization. Doing so provides contacts, offers visibility, and gives you experience in group dynamics and coalition building. The nonpartisan nature of many civic activities can be an asset because it shows you as a public-spirited citizen and not narrowly

constricted to one party or a highly-vocal, single-purpose advocacy group.

Persons already holding elective office who want to move to a broader arena -- local to state, state to national -- use various techniques to position themselves to appeal to the broader constituency. They join statewide and national associations. They go outside their locality or state to participate in events where they meet persons from elsewhere and begin to achieve visibility. They serve on committees, speak at political conventions, and sometimes form or join caucuses of like-minded persons. They may support a candidate for a party post or an elective office with the hope that they will receive reciprocal support when they are ready to run for office in this broader domain.

DECIDING WHEN TO RUN

You may decide to undertake several years of positioning before you seek elective office for the first time. Or you may plunge right in without a lot of preliminary effort. In either case, there are a number of questions to ask yourself before deciding what office to run for and when to do so.

- *What office do I want to seek? (See Table 1.) What are the district boundaries? (This may affect choice of residence.)*
- *Can I stand the heat of campaigning? The prospect of invasion of my privacy by the media? Attacks by opponents? Do I have the right temperament for competitive politics?*
- *Do I want to commit the time required for campaigning and holding public office? (Even a part-time office demands a lot of time, and full-time positions may take 60 to 80 hours a week.)*
- *Can I afford to work for the salary? (Some salaries for elective officials may seem high, but there are a lot of hidden expenses.)*
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The possible economic burden?

- *Is there a succession of offices for reaching my goal? (Such as, school board then county council; member of city council then mayor; mayor or county executive then governor; state representative, next state senator, then governor; U.S. representative then senator and maybe president or vice president; or a succession of appointive positions before running for elective office.)*
- *When will there be an opening -- at the next election or a subsequent one? (Because of term limit, announced intent of incumbent not to seek reelection, prospect that he or she will be running for another office.)*
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campaign commitments aren't observed, but many are. Thus, interaction with positioners and announced candidates is a worthy endeavor.

And don't forget, "you can't beat somebody with nobody!"

September 28, 1992

Chapter 2. Keeping Incumbents Alert

CIVIC2.081

What incumbents do. We have been talking about what persons not now holding a particular elective office do to position themselves to run. Another aspect of positioning is what incumbents do as they look ahead to the next election. There is variation between legislators and chief executives. For both their actions become part of the continuous consent process.

Immediately after their election members of city and county councils, state legislatures, and the U.S. Congress write thank you notes to their supporters, attend community meetings as they prepare for the next session of the legislative body, and talk with campaign contributors (usually at the latter's request). They assign staff to respond to letters and phone calls from constituents on legislation and requests for assistance in dealing with the bureaucracy. They send out news releases to newspapers and to television and radio stations in their district, and they distribute newsletters. They schedule informal appearances around the district, sometimes hold hearings, and appear on radio and television talk shows. They introduce legislation upon request of their supporters. When they vote on legislation, they often have their eye on the next election.

Elected chief executives likewise maintain their ties with the citizenry between elections. Mayors and county executive speak at community meetings, tour neighborhoods, appear at numerous local events. They are likely to have an office of information and complaints for ready response to constituent concerns. Governors tour their states and speak at conventions of state organizations. The president of the United States speaks at conventions of national organizations, directly or through remote video connection. All of these chief executives hold news conferences, have staff for press relations, and have a unit to respond to constituent mail and phone calls. They require department heads and operating agencies to be sensitive to constituent concerns. Capital improvement projects, new program initiatives, and grants oftentimes are influenced by the executive's base of political support. So also is the legislation they favor. Rarely does an elected chief executive wanting another term or desiring another office lose sight of the next election.

From our perspective as citizens these are actions we want elected officials to take in order to be responsive to us after they are elected. From elected officials' perspective these actions are fulfillment of their public responsibilities. They demonstrate sensitivity to constituents while at the same time building support for reelection. In practice the lines are often blurred between being a faithful representative and positioning oneself as a candidate for reelection. Good constituent service is good politics. So be it.

The down side is that incumbents sometimes have privileges that give them unfair advantage

over opponents in the next election. For example, legislators send out government-financed newsletters close to the election, and both legislators and elected chief executives have fundraising advantages because of their incumbency. We need to deal with this concern (and I'll take it up later), but we shouldn't deny elected officials the opportunity to keep in touch with their constituents and be responsive to them. We want this to happen. It's another aspect of the continuous, interactive nature of the consent process.

CIVIC2.101

Legislators. When we speak of legislators in the United States we encompass a wide spectrum: town and city council members in places ranging in population from a few hundred to millions; county commissioners and council members in both rural and urban counties; state legislators in states of differing size; and members of the U.S. Congress. We elect these legislators, and a majority of them seek reelection.

In smaller jurisdictions legislators occupy part-time positions with little or no pay and earn their livelihood in other ways. Members of Congress, some state legislators, and some members of city and county councils serve full time. In between are local council members and state legislators who are paid for part-time service. Staff assistance ranges from none for small town council members to sizable operations for members of Congress.

Most legislators take seriously their responsibility to respond to communications from citizens. In smaller locales it is direct and entirely personal. In contrast members of Congress have paid staff both in Washington and in district offices assigned to receiving and processing letters, postcards, phone calls, telegrams, and faxes from constituents. They draft replies for the member's signature, perhaps using standard paragraphs worked out with the member. Some staff are assigned to casework on matters dealing with executive agencies. State legislators and members of larger city and county councils also have staff to perform these duties.

My impression is that personal staff of legislators in the United States spend far more time in dealing with constituents than with legislation. Even when committee staff is included, my guess is that the total legislative staff payroll in the United States is weighted toward constituent service and response.

The legislator is, of course, in charge. Where the volume of mail is small, she or he reads all letters and other communications that come in. Where the volume is large, the legislator is more likely to review a summary of constituent concerns but may read a representative sample of letters from individuals and probably all letters from major supporters and powerful advocacy groups.

With conscientious legislators (and most of them are) letters from constituents make a difference, especially those that seem personal and not mass produced by an advocacy organization. A dozen or so letters on an issue that hasn't had a lot of publicity is likely to cause the legislator to take notice. On major issues, such as the congressional resolution to authorize use of offensive military force in the Persian Gulf in January 1991, millions of letters, calls, and telegrams pour into Congress. Legislative offices tabulate the messages, pro and con. Although legislators don't necessarily consider the result to be a binding referendum on how they should vote, they pay attention.

Elected chief executives. Mayors, county executives, governors, and the president of the United States also take heed of communications from citizens. They organize their office to receive letters and phone calls and to respond, either directly or through referral to operating departments.

Mayors and county executives receive fewer letters on legislation than council members do, but they do hear from citizens on major policy issues and on projects they want the city or county to undertake. Usually one or two persons on the mayor's or county executive's personal staff handle these matters.

For a wider range of concerns it is common for city governments to have a mayor's office for information and complaints (the name varies) and for county governments to have comparable units. Citizens call to find out who within the bureaucracy handles particular matters. They ask the city or county to help solve particular problems. They complain about what a city or county agency has or hasn't done. Personnel in the information office are trained to provide answers, if not directly at least through referral. They also track how agencies respond to these referrals.

In the late 1960s and early '70s a number of cities decentralized the information and complaint function to neighborhood offices, sometimes called little city halls or as part of multi-service neighborhood centers. They often hired staff indigenous to the neighborhood. This was intended to overcome citizen alienation, evidenced in that period by civil disorder in African American and Hispanic neighborhoods. During the 1980s many of these units were closed because of city budgetary restraints, but some aspects still exist in neighborhood centers.

Governors have staff in their office to receive and organize the response to letters and phone calls from citizens on policy issues. They are less likely than mayors to have information and complaint offices because state agencies perform fewer direct services for citizens.

In Washington the Office of the President has a citizens' liaison unit that orchestrates contacts with major citizen organizations and a public comment telephone line, staffed by volunteers. Not all of the millions of letters to the White House are answered, but many are, usually with a form letter from a staff person in the White House or from an executive agency.

Beyond what their own offices do, chief executives at all levels of government are concerned that the bureaucracy is organized to respond effectively to citizen comments, requests for information, and complaints.

Public agencies. How operating agencies organize their response varies according to the nature of the services they provide. For example, local public works departments receive lots of calls on refuse collection and street maintenance; parks and recreation departments get numerous requests for information on services, facilities, and events; state employment services hear from many persons seeking unemployment benefits and job referrals. They are more likely to have public information telephone lines than agencies with fewer individual services.

A number of federal agencies maintain special units to deal with the public. Sometimes they are called "office of consumer affairs", which unfortunately is a misconception. The public they deal with are citizens, who are expected to be engaged in two-way exchange with public officials, and not merely passive consumers of governmental services. "Public liaison" is a more appropriate concept and a better name for these offices.

Department heads in local government don't receive a lot of mail and phone calls on proposed legislation and policy issues because the public doesn't perceive them as playing a major role in policy matters. In contrast, the U.S. Secretary of State gets a lot of correspondence on foreign policy issues, directly or upon referral of letters to the president. Other members of the president's cabinet hear from people on matters within their jurisdiction. Thus, cabinet secretaries have staff units assigned to answer letters and keep track of trends in public opinion that these letters express.

Citizen letters and calls reflect what's on people's minds at the moment and what they feel strongly enough to communicate their views. This is a vital source of information for public officials. Their response is another part of the interactive process that achieves the consent of the governed in formulation of public policy. As in a jigsaw puzzle every piece is important for completing the total picture, so also each part of the consent process has significance.

Chapter 5. Campaigns to Accentuate the Positive...

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Campaigning

At some point individuals make a decision that now is the time to become a candidate for a particular elective office. This may follow months of positioning. It may occur suddenly because of a particular event, such as a public crisis or the death, illness, or unexpected retirement of an incumbent.

After making the decision to run, a candidate enters into a new phase consisting of informal campaigning and planning for a full-fledged campaign that will start with a formal announcement of candidacy. For the purpose of our discussion two aspects should be noted: mechanical and structural matters and the way pre-announcement campaigning enters into the consent-of-the-governed process.

Planning. This is not the place to present a detailed campaign manual, but we can note that experienced campaigners deal with the following matters in developing a campaign plan:

- Analysis of previous campaigns
- Voter profile: previous results, who votes, swing voters.
- Methods of voter contact, such as direct mail, phone banks, door-to-door visits, literature handouts, house parties
- Get out the vote tactics
- Media: use of television, radio, newspapers; relationships with reporters and editors
- Scheduling
- Campaign organization
- Assignments for staff and volunteers
- Office space
- Budget
- Fundraising: who does, methods

Lining up support. As campaign planning is going on, the candidate will be lining up support from individuals and organizations. This is likely to build upon contacts made over many months during the positioning period, but now the candidate is asking for specific commitments of support, including endorsement, recruitment of volunteers, and financial contributions.

As part of this process, the candidate will solidify positions on various issues and will start making commitments to various groups on specific policies. Therefore, it is a good time for advocacy

groups to make contact with the candidate (or strengthen a previous relationship), to offer support, and to get their ideas incorporated into campaign positions.

The candidate may also start commissioning opinion polls and focus groups in order to learn more about the voters' views on various issues and to gain insights on how to state his or her positions during the campaign.

The interchange that occurs as candidates line up support enters into the consent process, for it begins to tell voters what the candidate will do if elected and it gives various individuals and organizations an opportunity to influence a future public official.

Formal campaign begins. With this preparation completed, the candidate is ready to make a formal announcement of candidacy. This requires thoughtful planning of where, when, who to invite, what to say, how to get favorable publicity.

The formal campaign commences with the announcement of candidacy. This is followed by execution of the various activities of the campaign plan. I'll not go into them in detail, for they are well known to observers of and participants in political campaigns. Moreover, there is an abundance of information available from political parties, consultants, and other practitioners.

From the broader prospective of representative democracy, the campaign should offer voters a full notion of what they are consenting to if they elect particular persons to public office. Unfortunately, some candidates cloak what they themselves believe in a mantle of negative campaigning directed against their opponent.

Chapter 6. ...And Eliminate the Negative *(partial draft)*

Negative campaigning has been on the rise in the United States since the 1980s. Rather than saying what they are for, candidates attack their opponent. They go beyond debate on policy issues and press untrue or distorted charges about the opponent's record in government. They and their henchmen put out information about the opponent's private life. Sometimes they smear his or her family.

At worst the negative campaigners play on popular racial, ethnic or religious prejudice in ways that increases intergroup conflict. Thus, "quotas" has become a tar-and-feather word. Other terms are used despairingly to divide, such as "radical feminists", "welfare cheaters", "ex-cons", and racial and ethnic innuendo that I shan't repeat. In this manner, some candidates are emphasizing the politics of fear rather than hope.

This is nothing new in American politics. Indeed, some past campaigns have been even nastier than what we've seen in recent years. But past practices don't make it right.

The best remedy is self-discipline by candidates. Just say no. You who are candidates can choose not to engage in this practice. You can decide that you won't partake in the politics of fear. You can conclude that getting elected is not worth the price of participating in divisive campaigning that is harmful to our democratic way of life. You can forbid all of your supporters from using smear tactics.

But if some candidates persist in negative campaigning, we citizens must find ways to end the practice. Candidates who are attack victims need constructive methods for rebuttal and mitigating the effect.

WHAT CITIZENS CAN DO

Citizens can press candidates to cease their negative campaigning. They can ask every candidate to agree to the Code of Fair Campaign Practices laid out in the previous chapter. They can publish and widely distribute lists of those who do and who don't subscribe to fair practices. They can establish review committees to monitor campaign advertising, speeches, video and radio presentations and then point out practices that violate the Code of Fair Campaign Practices.

Whenever a negative ad appears on television and radio and in newspapers, citizens can write the candidate in protest. Such letters will be most influential when they come from the candidate's supporters or supposed constituency, but anyone can write. Here are some samples, based upon ads and practices of recent campaigns:

Dear Senator:

I saw your ad on television tonight where a pair of white hands were crumpling a job rejection letter. The narrator implied that the job went unfairly to a black person and that your opponent favors taking jobs from deserving whites and giving them to undeserving blacks.

Your appeal is racism, pure simple. As one who has voted for you twice previously because you want to cut the federal deficit, I deplore this racist approach. I urge you to cease this kind of negative campaigning and to focus on really important issues, such as getting more jobs for everybody in our state.

Yours truly,
Charlotte Piedmont

Dear Sir:

As a life-long Republican, I'm appalled at your TV ad suggesting that our opponent willingly lets black murderers out of prison so that they can rape white women. You and I both know that it's not true. This appeal to racist fears should have no place in the party of Abraham Lincoln.

With best regards,
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Dear Governor:

Your TV ad indicating that your opponent will severely cut social security benefits has my 80-year old aunt very upset. Her only income comes from social security, so her fears are easily aroused. However, the Republicans support a strong social security system as much as we Democrats. So please stop causing the old folks needless anxiety.

Sincerely,
Willie Franklin

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I'm greatly disturbed that our party committee has hired private investigators to inquire into the personal lives and finances of the relatives of our opponent. As a major contributor, I'm deeply disturbed that my money is going for this purpose. Families of politicians have a right to privacy, just like the rest of us.

I realize that the opposition is bringing up matters in the private life of our candidate. But because it is done to us doesn't make it right. That's insufficient justification for using the same methods in dealing with our opponent. Somebody's got to put a stop to this unsavory practice. So please call off your investigators.

With best regards,
Judith Post

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the TV commentators pointed out, an entire evening at our party's national convention was devoted to "defining the opponent". It was all negative, and a lot of it was grossly exaggerated. That's terrible. A waste of time and money. At a time when the nation is crying for leadership we should have used this exposure on national television to offer a positive vision for America.

Maybe your expert political consultants think we can pick up votes by going negative, but I for one believe we should emphasize the positive. And I'm surprised that our candidate, who seems to be a decent person, would permit a "garbage" evening at the convention.

Sincerely yours,
Betty Barber
(Mrs. Richard R.)

Many politicians will continue negative campaigning as long as they believe it picks up more vote than it loses. We need to let them know that we find this style repulsive. We need to insist that they accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

WHAT CANDIDATES CAN DO

If you're a candidate and your opponent launches a negative campaign against you, there are ways to respond without stooping to a negative counterattack. Humor may be the best response.

For example, in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate in Wisconsin in 1992 the two candidates perceived as frontrunners levied a barrage of negative attacks on each other. The third candidate, Russ Feingold, considered an underdog, gained from this and rose in opinion poll ranking. To take advantage of public revulsion of mudslinging and to avoid being a victim, he ran a TV ad that [complete]. He got the nomination.

[Find other examples. Perhaps with pictures.]

When my older daughter was in first grade, she learned an effective way to counter name-calling that seems to be a routine part of child culture. A TV ad could be based upon her technique, as follows:

Scene one. Two six-year old boys (or girls) in a schoolyard.

First boy: You're a stinkeroo and a mealy-mouth mushhead!

Second boy: Ha! I'm rubber, you're glue. The bad things you say about me bounce off and stick on you!

Scene two. The two candidates in cartoon style.

Your opponent: [Accusing you of something.]

Key words appear on screen, such as "quotas", "tax and spend".

You: I'm rubber, you're glue. The bad things you say about me bounce off and stick on you.

The key words bounce off you and stick on him/her.

Narrator: [Citing some action or speech by your opponent or his/her appointees that do what he/she has accused you of, such as preferential hiring or tax increases.]

Another TV ad might feature you, the candidate, in an informal setting, speaking in conversational tone:

Candidate: My friends, you have been hearing my opponent and his supporters say all kinds of bad things about me. But for some strange reason, he [she] never wants to talk about the problems that concern you most, such as [unemployment, environmental hazards, etc.].

It reminds me of a preacher who wrote his gestures on the margin of his sermon. At one point, it said, "Look up at Heaven." [Look up with raised arms] At another place, "Point in scorn." [Point finger at camera] Toward the end of the sermon, the note said, "Argument weak here. Yell loudly."

That's the way with my opponent. He's [she's] weak on the issues so he [she] tries to distract you the voter with loud accusations about me and my family. I know you're too smart to be fooled by this diversion from matters that really concern you. So I suggest that you call or write him [her] and ask him [her] to stick with important issues.

Ingenious campaign media specialists can come up with many other humorous ways to counter negative campaign advertising.

If as a candidate you are debating an opponent who is very abusive, you can tell the preacher story, or you can use a method suggested by Buddha {trace source}.

[To audience] Friends, you have heard my opponent unleash a scurrilous attack against me. You may wonder how I'm going to respond. I simply want to ask him [her] a question.

[Turning to opponent] (Name), if you offer me a gift and I don't accept it, to whom does the gift belong? Obviously the gift still belongs to you. Likewise with your abuse. I don't accept it. You may keep it for yourself.

And if your audience is appreciative of a more earthy approach, you can add:

[To audience] Let me put in another way. It's like spitting into the wind. The spittle blows right back into your own face.

[To opponent] That's way it is with your abusive words. People in this state who insist upon fairness and friendly debate will blow your abuse right back on you. [Pulling out a handkerchief] And to show you that I have no ill-feelings, I offer you my handkerchief to wipe it off.

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[More to be written.]

September 24, 1992

Chapter 8. Voting: Democracy's Life Depends Upon It

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Voting

Political campaigns come to a climax on election day. For candidates it is judgment day. For citizens it is a test of civic responsibility. For a representative democracy the breadth of voter turnout is a measure of how strongly the citizenry participates in this phase of the consent process.

Registration. Before people can vote, they have to be registered. Usually this has to be accomplished prior to election day, though in some places election-day registration is permitted. Some states require registered voters to vote with a prescribed regularity in order to keep their registration alive.

Voter registration is important for candidates, political parties, and various advocacy groups, and they frequently carry out extensive registration campaigns. They emphasize registering persons who are most likely to vote for the party's candidate or for candidates favored by the advocacy group. Therefore, they conduct registration campaigns targeted at specific precincts or at particular segments of the population. At the same time nonpartisan organizations may be encouraging all potential voters to register to vote.

From the broad perspective of achieving full democracy, the easier registration is the better. Gone are the days when potential voters had to come to the courthouse at limited times and to pay a poll tax. But some jurisdictions make it easier for people to register than do others. They allow for organizations to set up voter registration tables in shopping centers, provide for registration at public agency field offices, such as employment centers, and permit registration by mail. A number of states combine voter registration with driver license applications and renewal.

Those of you, my fellow citizens, who want to strengthen voter participation in elections should examine the registration process in your state and work for improvements to make it more open and more easily accessible.

Those of you who are from a racial, ethnic, or socio-economic community which has low voter turnout may want to undertake a strenuous voter registration campaign within your community. Essential elements include accurate information about the process, awareness of deadlines, and thorough organization of an outreach campaign.

Get out the vote. For candidates, political parties, and advocacy groups, getting out the vote

on election day is an important endeavor. This has to be an intensive process, carried out in 12 to 16 hours. For this to happen, careful preparation is essential.

The starting place is adoption of a get-out-the-vote campaign plan two or three months prior to the election. Among the elements are these:

- *Appoint a get-out-the-vote director.*
- *Recruit and train volunteers.*
- *Learn the election law, such as rules for poll watchers.*
- *Determine which precincts to target and where polling places are.*
- *Obtain registration lists for targeted precincts and if possible determine past voting patterns of registered voters.*
- *Conduct telephone and door-to-door surveys to discover individual voter preference in the current election.*
- *Near election time, encourage persons identified as supporting your candidate to vote, remind them of location and hours of the polling place, offer rides and babysitting.*
- *On election day provide rides and babysitting as requested, be at the polls to check off who has voted, make contacts with those who haven't and are favorable to your candidate, and urge them to vote.*

After the polls close, campaign workers assemble to wait for election results. After a while the candidate appears to claim victor or to acknowledge defeat. Ordinarily she or he is joined on stage by family, top campaign aides, and other prominent supporters. It is not unusual that persons aspiring to run in the future find a place on stage, visible to the television cameras, as they position themselves for the next election. And so the cycle continues.

Chapter 9. Governmental Decision Making: Who and How

There are almost a half million popularly elected officials in the United States who possess legal authority to make decisions for particular governmental units: national, state, county, municipal, township, school board, special district. That seems like a lot of people. But at the same time 185 million Americans age 18 and older are *not* officeholders. We are the citizens who give our consent to public officials whom we elect to govern.

These officials gain our initial consent through election. The consent process then continues as citizens and public officials interact in the decision-making processes of government. Citizens -- some more than others -- constantly exercise their influence on these decisions. If we are to broaden citizen participation in this ongoing consent process, we need clear understanding about who the real decision makers are and how they go about making decisions.

Although most of us don't have first hand experience as an elected public official, we have had direct experience in democratic decision making in organizations we belong to: neighborhood associations, churches, synagogues, civic groups, service clubs, lodges, and many others. We can build on this experience to obtain better comprehension of the public decision-making process.

Experience with Citizen Associations

To start with, think about a citizen association you belong to, one that is entirely voluntary without any staff. Perhaps it has annual election of officers by all members who attend a scheduled meeting. It may have committees dealing with a variety of matters. It has a monthly business meeting at a regular time and place. All members may attend and vote.

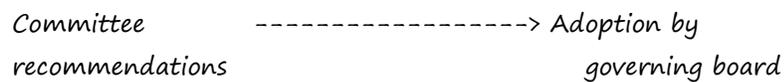
The president calls the meeting to order and presents an agenda for adoption. The secretary reads the minutes of the previous meeting (unless they have been circulated in advance), and they are approved. Then come committee reports. Small committees have met since the previous business meeting and now offer recommendations for approval by the larger body. On certain committee reports, someone asks clarifying questions from the floor. Most reports are approved as presented, but one of them has a detail that provokes considerable discussion, in fact takes up half of the meeting. Somebody offers an amendment, which is approved by a narrow vote (or rejected), and then the whole report is approved as amended.

Under new business a member suggests that the association send \$100 to victims of a recent hurricane in Florida, and this gains unanimous approval. Another member proposes a new activity for the association. Several members speak in favor, but one member expresses some doubts and believes the matter deserves further study. So it is referred to a committee with instructions to

report back at the next meeting. After some announcements the meeting adjourns.

Who were the decision makers? In a formal sense all members present and voting. Yet in actuality they approved almost everything worked out in committee. So in these matters committee members were the initial decision makers, subject to ratification by the whole body. Only on one detail was a committee recommendation challenged and modified. Two new matters came up. The donation was approved, but the new project proposal was referred to a committee for study.

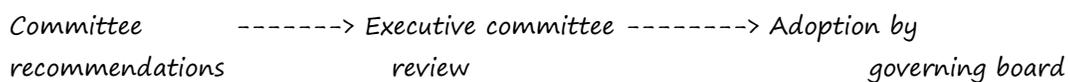
This particular association has a two-step decision-making process: (1) consideration by committee followed by recommendation and (2) action by all association members attending a business meeting, shown as follows:



For the most part decisions made by committees are approved by the whole body. Therefore, committee members are the major decision makers on matters within their jurisdiction. However, the whole body has an opportunity to review committee decisions and modify them. Members in attendance will approve a noncontroversial proposal coming before it for the first time, but more complicated matters brought up in the business meeting are likely to be referred to a committee for consideration.

Below the surface in this two-step process other things may be happening. The association's president may have an interest in a particular activity and therefore will talk to the committee chair about it or attend the committee meeting. Several members may have a concern for some other matter and will ask to sit in on the committee meeting and express their views. When a new proposal comes up on the floor of the business meeting that the president doesn't like, she or he will encourage a motion to refer it to a committee and will then talk to the committee chair about killing it in committee or bringing out an unfavorable report.

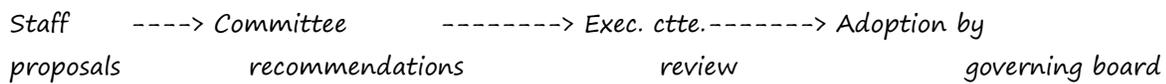
Large citizen associations with numerous committees may find it convenient to create an executive committee consisting of officers and committee chairs. The executive committee meets between meetings to coordinate the work of the various committees, develop an agenda for the next meeting, and perhaps offer recommendations to the whole body. This adds another step in the decision-making process, as follows:



The situation changes in associations that have paid staff. For a church, staff is the minister,

for a synagogue the rabbi. For a neighborhood improvement association a full-time coordinator as sole staff. For a social service agency an executive director in charge of a number of service personnel. For a chamber of commerce a manager, For a labor union a paid president. And so on.

The governing board may have committees like the citizen association, but rather than being solely voluntary the staff works with the officers and committees. The board chair and staff director may meet frequently and collaborate on guiding the board and its committees in a certain policy direction. Staff may present ideas to committees, meet with them, and follow through on committee decisions. The board chair, other officers, and committee chair may meet as an executive committee, aided by the staff director. This makes decision making a four-step process:



In this process the staff director, though appointed by the board and accountable to it, becomes a decision maker by making proposals which committees use as point of departure, by participating in executive committee and board meetings, and by working with the board chair to provide overall direction to the association's policy-making process.

If we examine the dynamics of the voluntary citizen association (whether with staff or without), we notice a division of labor and a differentiation of roles, influence, and power. A few persons initiate policy which a larger number of members of the association or governing body review and approve. An individual may have the lead role on one policy area but play a more passive role on other matters. The president and other officers are likely to be involved across the board, and so will the staff director, but on most issues they will not have the intensity of interest that committee members have on matters within their jurisdiction. So while every association member, everyone on the governing board has equal voting rights, some members have greater influence on particular concerns. And the extent to which committee chairs and officers control the agenda and maximize their influence on decisions, they have greater power.

In these associations some persons are leaders, others are followers. A person may be a leader on one issue and a follower in other matters. Officers are chosen by the members and may have power to appoint committee chairs, so there is democratic accountability. At the same time there may be other persons on the governing board or in the association at large who hold no office but who have influence because of their wisdom, social stature, financial contributions, or leadership of a minority faction. Thus, an association may have both formally elected and appointed leaders and informal leaders within it. Although an organization chart may show a neat hierarchy of officers and committees, policy determination is most frequently guided by a leadership coalition rather than a single commander with unchecked power.

Members have formal control of policies through decisions made by voting at business meetings with the majority prevailing. But long before the matter comes to a vote there is a lot of talk and often negotiations. Talk occurs not only in the formal setting of committee meetings and the business session of the whole body but also informally among leaders and advocates of particular positions. Most often an effort is made to achieve a consensus rather than force a vote on every jot and tittle. To reach consensus advocates of different viewpoints make compromises, especially if they are interested in moving ahead. Formal votes are reserved for major issues where division is apparent and no ready mutual accommodation is in the offing. On the whole bargaining is the most common mode rather than showdown votes, although the latter may generate the greatest emotion and receive the most public attention. Thus, there is much more to decision making in democratic organizations than the final vote on issues.

To summarize, when we think about our experience with voluntary associations, we realize that:

- Decisions are usually made through a process extending over a period of time.
- Certain persons have special influence over particular decisions at different stages of the process.
- A leadership coalition has greatest influence in the total process but not unchecked authority.
- Bargaining and compromise is a common mode of operating.
- The ultimate vote on a particular matter, while indispensable, constitutes a fraction of the decision-making process.

As it is in our citizen associations, so also it is in government.

Governing Coalitions¹

The kind of leadership coalition we observe in citizen associations also occurs in the decision-making processes of government. We can call it a governing coalition to signify its function. It fits into the legal structure of government, as shown on organization charts, but participation in a governing coalition ordinarily goes beyond the persons filling official positions.

In municipal government the governing coalition will almost always include the elected officials -- mayor and members of city council -- and also the appointed city manager, if there is one. In county government, likewise: elected county executive, county commissioners or members of county

¹ This section is based upon my previous writing on this subject in *The Organization and Operation of Neighborhood Councils* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), pp.126-8.

council, and appointed county manager. Similarly for township governments.

In addition, a governing coalition of local government is likely to include some of the following, though not necessarily all at the same time: administrators heading public agencies; leaders of the victorious political party; representatives of business and labor; leaders of ethnic, racial, and religious groups active in public affairs; leaders of other organized interests, such as social welfare organizations, vociferous issue groups, and strong neighborhood associations. Except for the elected chief executive, each member of the governing coalition represents a minority. Even the chief executive is limited in speaking for the people as whole, for his or her political base is likely to consist of a collection of minorities that together provided an electoral minority.

Within a governing coalition some will have more power than others, and the respective degree of influence will vary from one issue to the next. Moreover, the balance of power will be in a constant state of flux. If one person or group isn't exercising its full potential of influence, then another person or group is like to exercise more than its proper share. But if this second group goes too far, the first group, or a third or fourth group will begin to resist. Thus, a governing coalition is quite dynamic.

Around each cluster of decisions there is probably a subcoalition. One subcoalition might deal with housing, another with highways, a third with tax policies, and fourth with employment programs, and so on. Some subcoalitions are basically tripartite, consisting of administrators, legislators, and representatives of advocacy organizations. Memberships in subcoalitions may overlap but never be identical. Leaders who are in several subcoalitions have different weights in each depending upon the strength of influence and depth of feelings of the group they represent. The mayor or county executive usually has a role in most of the subcoalitions. This makes the overall structure what political scientist Robert Dahl has called an executive-centered coalition.²

A governing coalition is no monolith. Internal decision making is characterized by continual bargaining. Participants are constantly negotiating, trading support, building and reinforcing alliances. For the most part this isn't a formal process conducted around a table as in bargaining during labor-management negotiations, although some of this occurs in meetings of legislative committees and advisory boards. Rather it is informal, subtle, and sometimes quite elusive. Although ultimately formal decision are made by elected officials -- the chief executive and the local council -- they will usually take into account the views and strengths of others in the coalition, and even those outside the coalition in the opposition. Even a mayor or county executive who is reputed to be the local political boss lacks total command authority, for he or she has to constantly touch base with leaders outside of government and sometimes has to bargain with his or her own appointees.

² Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

Ultimately decisions retain their democratic character because they require formal action elected officials, who were democratically selected for this role and can be replaced at the next election. Sometimes advocacy organizations not represented within the governing coalition can mobilize public support to overturn an informal decision of the governing coalition when it comes to vote at the city or county council. They might be assisted by council members who, though elected, are not included in the governing coalition.

Even though an outsider may believe there is an unbreakable solidarity that excludes any new participant, an effective governing coalition will admit new individuals and representatives of groups which are showing increased strength and have enough in common with the coalition to be a useful working partner. Participants in governing coalitions who become out of phase with the objectives of the coalition or who lose their supporters will be eased out, or simply ignored.

Some governing coalitions will try to preserve the status quo while others will initiate change. In either case the coalition, as a leadership group, will be committed to objectives that aren't shared by the entire citizenry. Nevertheless, the key leaders of the coalition will claim that their policies represent a broad community consensus.

The same kind of governing coalitions function in state governments and in the national government, though they are more complex and subcoalitions are more diversified. The governor and leading state legislators, the president and leading members of Congress play central roles but seldom have unrestricted dominance. They have to bargain among themselves, with their own appointees, with career administrators, with representatives of advocacy organizations, and with other persons who have influence because of campaign contributions, moral stature, or ability to mold public opinion through the media.

Local elected officials, or staff from their statewide organization, may be participants in the state's governing coalition. Representatives of local government, governors, and state legislators may participate in the national governing coalition and subcoalitions dealing with concerns of local and state governments. Business and labor representatives and other kinds of advocacy organizations try to get into the inner workings of subcoalitions handling with their interests.

Take virtually any subject that national and state governments deal with -- foreign policy, defense, international trade, transportation, housing, health, welfare, education, environment, natural resources, and dozens more --and you will find a coalition working out policies during the various stages of decision-making. Persons with official positions -- president, governor, chairs of authorizing committees and appropriation subcommittees on that subject -- will have the most power and influence, but their authority is contained by the bargaining that is an inevitable part of the political process.

This arrangement is widespread in American democracy. It fits within the framework of representative government because elected officials are principal participants and retain ultimate decision-making authority. Most persons from outside government who are involved in governing coalitions represent various interests. This achieves a kind of representative participation that is part of the consent-giving process.

If we move from description to evaluation, we can wonder how representative this kind of participation is. Do all groups and viewpoints have equal access to being represented on governing coalitions? No, they don't.

Remedies are twofold. First, elected officials, who are supposed to take a holistic view of the common good, can make a serious effort to achieve very broad participation in public decision making. Second, advocacy organizations can examine the decision-making process, learn its stages, determine who is influential at each stage, seek to make an impact, and maybe gain representation in the inner workings of governing coalitions. For them it is important to know both the who and when of decision making.

Decision-making Processes

Decisions by public officials can be divided into two categories. The first are basic policy decisions on laws, regulations, spending priorities, design of projects and programs. The second are day-to-day actions implementing broader decisions. The first involve leaders drawn together in the governing coalition while the second are handled by service personnel and their supervisors. Citizen advocates are more concerned with the first than the second, though they want day-to-day decisions made fairly and expeditiously.

Here are some examples of routine decisions. A police officer in a patrol car, seeing a driver run a light and at the same time noticing a holdup in progress, goes after the robber. The health department receives a complaint that a restaurant is filthy and sends out an inspector as soon as possible. A school teacher notes that a pupil is repeatedly absent and calls his parents. The public works department hears the weather report that heavy snow is expected and dispatches snowplows. The welfare office interviews a destitute person, determines that she is eligible for assistance, and writes a check. A coast guard crew observes a heavy-laden fishing boat, boards it, and discovers a large supply of illegal drugs. The U.S. Department of Education routinely sends checks to school districts according to an entitlement formula. And on and on as government personnel go about their duties in implementation of statutes and departmental policy. These are matters left to government personnel to carry out on their own.

In contrast to these actions that occur instantaneously or in short order, major public policy decisions can stretch out to weeks, months, even years. They generally occur in defined stages with

an expected sequence and sometimes a published schedule. Actors involved at different stages may vary, though one person or agency usually has continuity of involvement. The multi-staged approach can be illustrated by reviewing the broad outlines of several major governmental processes.

Enactment of laws by local, state, and national legislative bodies occurs through a regular sequence of events. Although the process usually doesn't have a precise time schedule, the necessary steps may consume three to nine months except in emergency situation. Most city and county councils are unicameral, and so is the Nebraska legislature. In simplified terms the legislative process for a typical city is as follows:

Introduction of bill ---->Committee hearing ----->Committee action ----->Adoption by council ----->Approval by mayor

In the U.S. Congress and the 49 bicameral state legislatures the process is more than twice as complicated because a bill has to go through these steps in each chamber (most commonly called the House of Representatives and the Senate), next to a conference committee drawn from the two bodies and back to each house for passage. In simplified form the process is like this:

Introduction of bill in House ---->Committee action ---->House approval ----->Adoption by House
 Conference committee

Introduction of bill in Senate ---->Committee action ---->Senate approval ----->Adoption by Senate

In Congress subcommittees generally hold the hearings and "mark up" the bill before it goes to the full committee, which can make further amendments. Bills in the U.S. House of Representatives go to the Rules Committee, which schedules their consideration by the whole body.

The annual operating budget of a municipality goes through this kind of legislative process and has additional stages of preparation. It may take six to nine months from start to finish, as follows:

Advance preparation ----->Departmental requests ---->Budget office review -->Chief executive determination ----->Council adoption

During the preparatory period departments begin considering what they want to request and the budget office prepares instructions to guide departmental submissions. Departmental requests are based upon these guidelines, though sometimes they go beyond what the budget office suggests and appeal to the mayor or manager. The budget office reviews departmental requests, makes

adjustments (conferring with the chief executive on important issues), and put together the total budget with expenditures balanced against anticipated revenues.

The chief executive gets more and more into the process as it goes along, makes major policy decisions on spending priorities and proposed revenue measures, and then formally transmits the budget to city council. At that time the complete budget is published for citizen review. City council holds public hearings with departmental representatives and citizens, modifies the budget as it chooses, and adopts it. In most cities the mayor has authority to veto the budget as adopted council, and in some places may veto specific items. Council can override, usually with a "super" majority of three-fifths or two-thirds required.

State governments and the national government follow a similar sequence. For the federal budget, however, the process in Congress is more complicated, as follows:

Adoption of budget----->Authorization ----->Appropriation
resolution of expenditures of funds

Adoption of the budget resolution occurs after consideration by House and Senate Budget Committees with a House-Senate conference committee to reconcile differences. Authorization of expenditures goes through a set of authorizing committees, divided among major functions (such as Agriculture, Armed Services, Education and Labor, and others) with a conference committees on each function. In the appropriation of funds appropriation subcommittees on each function play a major role, followed by review by the full appropriation committees, floor action, reconciliation of differences by a conference committee, and final passage by the entire Congress. The federal budgetary process takes about 15 months from the start of departmental preparation to appropriations of funds by Congress and approval by the president.

Another process common in governmental decision making is the development and adoption of plans for geographic areas (neighborhood, city, region) and particular projects (new school, recreational facility, highway). Planning follows a regular sequence but usually isn't bound to a calendar schedule. Major phases include:

Study ----->Consider ----->Draw up----->Adopt----->Implementation
problem alternatives plan plan

Where major policy decisions have already been made and administrators are figuring out how best to implement them, a shorter sequence occurs. For example, in northern cities where numerous potholes appear in streets during the winter the public works department has an appropriation for repairs. It is up to the public works director to decide priorities, such as major streets first, secondary streets next, minor streets last; or certain neighborhoods ahead of others. The

decision-making process is as follows:



This same process applies to many other governmental activities. For many of them citizens are quite willing for administrators to determine priorities for use of appropriated funds within the framework of policies adopted by the legislative body or the chief executive. But sometimes they aren't. For instance, I know a city where the citywide federation of neighborhood councils was greatly concerned about the pothole situation. After considerable discussion the federation vote to recommend to the public works director that the neighborhood with the most potholes receive first attention, and so. The public works director accepted this as a reasonable approach.

In this case citizens were involved at a stage when decisions were under active consideration. They had an organization that enabled them to work out their own priorities. They knew who the official decision maker was and had access. They were able to influence an aspect of public policy. For potholes, at least, their representative became part of the governing coalition. This may seem trivial, but it illustrates a manner of citizen influence that has broader application.

There are many other situations where early citizen involvement can occur. We'll take up some of these cases in later chapters, including: Advocacy organizations conferring with legislators and their staffs in drafting bills. Citizens interacting with departmental officials as the departments begin to prepare their budget requests. Neighborhood residents involved in defining problems during the initial stage of neighborhood planning.

In anticipation of this later discussion, here is a checklist for citizens to analyze governmental decision making:

- What is the process followed by governmental officials?
- Who is involved, officially and unofficially?
- How can one's interests be represented among these decision makers?
- At what stages do citizens have easy access?
- When do citizens have to be assertive to be heard?
- What is the best way to gain access in these circumstances?

Timing is crucial. One can be too early -- advocating a specific position before official decision makers are thinking about the issue; or too late -- recommending a particular action after concrete decisions have been made. More often citizens are too late than too early.

Conceptually consent of the governed in American is a continuous, interactive process. In practicality it occurs in specific situations at definite times and is accomplished by particular persons.

To be effectively involved, citizens must know who, when, and how. With this knowledge they are in a position to interact in a timely manner.

Chapter 10. Grassroots Organizing for Advocacy

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WHAT ADVOCACY GROUPS CAN DO

Often we find that we can be much more influential in dealing with our elected representatives if we join with others of similar persuasion. Therefore, we form advocacy groups. At one time political scientists called them pressure groups and now commonly refer to them as interest groups. Sometimes journalists contemptuously call them "special interests." So do some politicians, that is, the interests groups opposing them, but not the supportive ones. In the founding days James Madison had similar derision for "factions" in *Federalist No. 10*.

Such blanket condemnation of interest groups is ill-conceived. Their formation is a natural phenomenon. Indeed most of us are involved in one or more interest groups, sometimes in many. Interest groups aren't "them" but rather "us" in various manifestations. But because of the emotional baggage associated with the term "interest groups", I will speak of them as "advocacy groups".

We form advocacy groups around particular concerns that we share with others. Thus, an advocacy group might consist of persons sharing a common economic self-interest, such as retailers, manufacturers, importers, utilities, workers, farmers, commercial growers, consumers. It might be organized around particular issues, such as in past years abolition of slavery, civil service reform, and women's suffrage, and nowadays civil rights, improved public education, better health care, environment, and other causes. It might focus on an ideology, such as socialism, capitalism, populism, liberalism, conservatism, libertarianism, and so forth.

Democracy expects advocacy groups to form, to articulate their views, to press for advantage, but also to keep the common good in sight and to be willing to work out equitable compromises. An important function of democratic government is to achieve an effective balance among competing interests, to assure that no one group gains an unfair advantage, and especially to see that the interests of the weakest are not overlooked.

If you're a practitioner of an effective advocacy group, I have very little to teach you, for you probably know more about the subject than I do. I would, though, appeal to you to respect the common good that goes beyond your particular interest. Primarily I want to speak to you citizens who believe that your interests aren't well represented in public decision-making and to offer guidance on how you can be engaged in this aspect of the political process more effectively.

Organize

First of all your effectiveness can be multiplied by joining with others of similar persuasion. This is not to negate the need for individual expression. But under most circumstances persons sharing common concerns will have greater influence if they work together through some kind of organization.

Some advocacy groups arise almost spontaneously in response to an immediate threat to the interests of persons coming together. For example, a neighborhood threatened by a change in land use perceived by residents to be harmful. A group of businesses reacting to a proposal for higher taxes on their commodity or service. Persons concerned with environmental preservation responding to a corporate decision to make drastic changes in a tract of land.

In these circumstances organizing is fairly simple. One or a few people decide to call a meeting. They find a meeting place, pass the word, and a lot of people show up. With the audience already excited and aware of the issue, discussion can focus on next steps to take and who will do what.

Such advocacy groups, though, often have short lives. Once the issue is resolved -- successfully, unsuccessfully, or through compromise -- the organization's primary reason for existence has dissolved. The organization will cease to exist unless some other cause is identified, or unless a small leadership group wants to keep it going as a base for other kinds of activities.

To establish a more enduring advocacy group without the jolt provided by an external stimulus, careful preparation is essential. This can be accomplished by a small core of volunteers, but sometimes paid organizers are used to get things rolling. Whoever it is, thorough preparation is essential.

Successful organizers have learned that they must spend considerable time talking with lots of people informally. They find out how various people perceive the issue or cause that is the focus of organizing. They determine the level of interest among potential participants. They assess who the natural leaders are. This may lead to formation of a small nucleus to serve as initial leaders.

This nucleus then decides how best to proceed. One option is to have a series of small meetings, leading to a larger gathering. Or the nucleus might call a large meeting in the beginning. In either case a working agenda is useful. The agenda can be more informal in small meetings, but larger meetings need some structure to proceed effectively. Perhaps the nucleus proposes an agenda and lets the audience approve or modify it at the beginning of the session.

It is important for the first meeting to make decisions on how to proceed thereafter. Maybe the nucleus, with possible additions, is designated as an interim steering committee. A by-laws

committee might be formed and possibly a study committee on a particular topic is established with instructions to report back to the next meeting. Before adjournment the time and place for such a meeting should be set.

This is not the place to offer a full course on organizing advocacy groups. There are excellent sources for this, several of them listed at the end of this chapter. The point to note is that there is a solid body of knowledge on organizing that you can tap if you believe that your views are not well represented in the public decision-making process.

In many instances organizations find that their strength is enhanced by joining in coalition with other organizations. Here, too, careful preparation is crucial.

Several initiators can get together, identify their common concerns, decide what other organizations might want to be involved, make contact with them, and then work out a call for an initial meeting of the new coalition. Such a meeting requires a combination of structure and openness so that organizational representatives don't feel that all decisions have already been made by the organizing nucleus but at the same time the meeting is not chaotic and without direction.

Coalitions are among the most delicate of organizational species. Participating organizations usually want to retain their own identity, and in many instances they have different perception of the issue that brought them together. The challenge is to contain separatist tendencies in order to work out a common agenda that all participants can support. This requires mutual respect, including a willingness to agree to disagree on certain matters without dissolving the coalition.

Unity provides strength. One incentive can be the realization that some other advocacy coalition is already working on the other side of the issue. Unless your side is as well or better organized, you may lose out in the contest to influence public policy.

Electoral involvement. Many advocacy groups realize that their task of lobbying is easier if the right people (from their viewpoint) are elected to that office. For that reason they get involved in election campaigns, a topic we've considered in the previous chapter.

Some advocacy groups, however, avoid direct involvement in political campaigns because it would be divisive among their members. This is especially true of multi-agenda organizations, such as neighborhood associations and human needs coalitions. But even these groups may send questionnaires to all candidates, seeking their stand on particular issues, and may hold nonpartisan candidate forums.

Advocacy groups that do get involved in elections through endorsements, financial contributions, and recruitment of campaign volunteers often find that this increases their access to the

electd officials they have supported. It may not always secure the vote the advocacy group wants, but it does open doors so that they can make their case directly to the elected official. Access is a very valuable commodity.

Chapter 11. Lobbying

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WHAT INDIVIDUALS CAN DO

As individuals we can communicate our views to the president of the United States, members of Congress, governors, state legislators, mayors, city council members, county commissioners, county executives, county council members, township officials, school board members, and all the others whom we elect. We can also express our opinions to appointed governmental officials.

We let these public officials know what we think about current issues. If we disagree with their vote on a legislative matter or their executive decision, we let them know it. If we like what they've done, we express our approval. We ask them to help us in our dealings with the bureaucracy. Sometimes we ask for their assistance on other matters of our personal interests.

You the active citizen can choose from a variety of methods for reaching public officials. You can:

- **Write letters to legislators and executive officials.** This is most effective if it is spontaneous rather than part of a campaign of an advocacy group with a canned message. Being human, public officials respond more readily to courteous letters, even those opposing their viewpoint, than to vituperative missives. Many legislators read all of their constituent mail. Virtually all of them look over staff tabulations of calls and letters in order to notice trends of opinion.
- **Call your elected representative on the phone.** The smaller the district, the easier it is to talk with her or him personally (that is, city council members are more readily available than U.S. representatives). If you can't reach your representative directly, you can ask for the aide who handles your issue. You can call district and state offices of members of Congress and ask the staff to forward your message to Washington. Usually for less than a dollar you can call the U.S. Capitol (202 224-3131) and ask for your representative or senator. Most congressional offices are open by 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. (Eastern time) and stay open until 6:00 p.m. With time zone differences, you can save money by calling early or late from your zone.
- **Call chief executives' offices.** Most mayors, county executives, and governors have staff assigned to receiving constituent calls. The White House has a public comment line, open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern time), Monday through Friday (202 456-1111).
- **Send a telegram or fax a message** if you can find out the fax number (sometimes not readily

available).

- **Talk to your legislators personally by going to their office, meeting them on the street, attending a meeting where they are speaking.** Most U.S. representatives return to their districts regularly. During recess periods they may schedule a series of public appearances at different locales, announced in local papers.
- **Talk to elected chief executives and department heads when they appear at community meetings.**
- **Be alert to appearances of public officials on radio and TV talk shows. Call in your questions and comments.**

Good timing is indispensable. To be effective you need to reach legislators on a particular issue before they vote on it, and you should communicate with the chief executive and department heads before specific policy decisions are finalized. Because the timing issue is so crucial, we'll consider it with greater specificity later in this chapter when we take up group advocacy.

Public officials expect to receive communications from their constituents. Some are more responsive than others. If they are too unresponsive, you have the opportunity to replace them at the next election.

Know the Decision-making Process

In seeking to influence governmental policy it is essential for an advocacy group (and individual citizens, too) to understand the decision-making process and who the primary decision makers are. To be influential involvement must be timely so as to reach decision makers when a matter is under active consideration but before they have reached final conclusions. Usually continuity of involvement is a necessity. For this purpose the calendar is an essential tool.

Budget making. *Take the budgetary process as an example. The budget is one of the most important policy statements of local, state, and national government, of school boards and other governmental bodies because it determines patterns of expenditures and revenues. Typically a local government budget will go through the following stages:*

Stage One: Advance Preparation. The budget office starts making economic projections and revenue estimates for the upcoming fiscal year. Operating agencies begin thinking about what they want in their budgets. Then the budget office issues a set of guidelines for departmental submissions.

Stage Two: Departmental Requests. Various departments develop their requests for the new fiscal year and submit them to the budget office in a prescribed manner.

Stage Three: Budget Office Review. Analysts in the budget office review departmental requests and may propose reductions and other changes. The budget office adds up all requested expenditures and compares them with anticipated revenue. This may lead to paring here and there as the budget office puts the budget together as a whole.

Stage Four: Chief Executive Review. During the earlier stages the chief executive (mayor, county executive, manager) is in touch with the process, determines main priorities, makes decisions on key issues, such as a budget freeze, selective increases, revenue matters. The closer to the time for submission to the legislative body, the more attention the chief executive gives. With staff assistance, the chief executive drafts a budget message and then submits the budget to city or county council. Usually the budget is published at this time.

Stage Five: Council Determination. Council holds public hearings, starting with heads of public agencies and usually providing an opportunity for public comment at the end. Sometimes a council holds private, executive sessions to work out budget details before discussing the budget in a public session. Council adopts the budget, oftentimes with amendments, and returns it to the chief executive for approval. If the chief executive vetoes the council's version of the budget, the council can override (usually requiring a three-fifths or two-thirds majority) or may have to make revisions acceptable to the chief executive.

Stage Six: Implementation. Once adopted, the budget goes into effect at the beginning of the fiscal year. The finance office allocates funds to the operating departments and might make quarterly allotments to spread out spending. Usually departments have some leeway in transferring funds between programs, but major changes have to receive council approval.

Stage Seven: Audit. After the fiscal year is over, the auditor or comptroller audits departmental accounts to determine if they complied with the budget and spent the money in a proper fashion.

State governments and the federal government follow the same budgetary philosophy of executive preparation and legislative adoption. The federal process is more complex because the budget resolution that Congress adopts merely sets a broad outline and details are developed through two other processes: authorizing legislation and appropriations.

Ordinarily the general public first hears about the budget when the chief executive sends it to the legislative body (end of Stage Four). It is published as a thick, complicated document. Administrative officials tend to dominate public hearings, with the citizen voices heard only at the

end. By this time it is very difficult to make major changes in the budget because an increase in expenditures in one area may require a counterbalancing reduction elsewhere, or higher taxes.

The greatest opportunity to influence the budget is in Stage Two when departments are developing their requests and Stage Three when the budget office is drawing the entire budget together. If an advocacy group is to be influential in those stages, it must itself be active in Stage One to prepare its own budgetary proposals.

Thus, for a local budget that goes into effect on January 1, citizen preparation should commence the preceding spring, and efforts to impact departments and the budget office should occur during the summer. For a state budget that becomes effective on June 1, the preceding fall is the time to begin. The federal fiscal year starts October 1, and advocacy groups need to start their efforts in September and October of the preceding year to influence executive departments. For all three levels of government, advocacy groups need to follow the budget all the way through the legislative process.

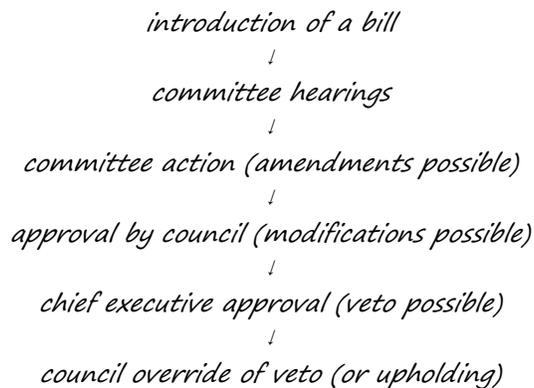
There are some cities which open up the budget process to citizens during these early stages, and we'll look at this experience in the next chapter. Where budget making is not as open, advocacy groups should make a calendar of the budget process so that they can initiate involvement in a timely manner.

Legislation. This same sense of timing is also important in enactment of laws by legislative bodies. Note, for example, the process of how Congress enacts a law, as shown on in the following simplified chart:¹

¹ *Register Citizen Opinion*. Washington: United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, 1991. p.34.

In reality the process is more complicated because subcommittees usually consider bills before they are taken up by the full committee, and in the House of Representatives bills have to be cleared by the Rules Committee before they come to the floor.

The same basic process occurs in states with bicameral legislatures (all except Nebraska). Most local governments have unicameral councils which use the following process:



Knowledgeable advocacy groups realize that their greatest influence may occur in drafting legislation before introduction and in the work of committees and subcommittees. To be sure, amendments are offered on the floor and sometimes pass, but typically only a small number of changes occur after a bill leaves the committee.

Thus, early involvement is essential for advocacy groups which want to make an impact on legislation. The same holds true for writing and adopting administrative regulations by various departments. And when the chief executive makes appointments to boards and commissions, the crucial early stage is assembling a list of likely candidates, describing their qualifications, and mustering support for one's favorites.

Lobby

To influence decision makers advocacy groups engage in an enterprise known as lobbying -- a practices that has become a fundamental party of American democracy. It has two expressions: direct and grassroots, plus a sidelight involvement in elections.

Direct lobbying. Applying their knowledge of the calendar, advocacy groups are likely to be in touch with state legislators and members of Congress in their home community and at their office at the capitol between the election in November and opening of the legislative session in January. They indicate what they want to occur during the session, and they may offer drafts of legislation. Those which make political contributions may help to pay off campaign debts.

Before, during, and after the session, advocacy groups invite legislators to speak at association gatherings, such as breakfasts, dinners, and conventions. They may offer an honorarium and pay travel expenses if allowed. Advocacy groups also pay attention to legislative staffs, inviting them to breakfast meetings and paying their fare to conventions (maybe with extra time for golf, tennis, swimming, skiing). Although cash bribery to buy votes is rare in American politics nowadays, payment of speech honorarium and travel is a first cousin and deserves universal banishment.

Throughout the legislative session lobbying goes on day and night. Lobbyists follow every piece of legislation of interest to their organization. They may help draft it, offer amendments, attend public hearings, testify, observe open committee meetings, sit in the gallery of the legislative body, catch members as they come and go in the capitol lobby (the origin of the term), stop in their office, take them to lunch and dinner, get to know them personally, and in other ways press for approval of their viewpoint.

To engage in lobbying a huge number of trade associations have their national headquarters in Washington, D.C. or maintain a legislative office there. There are so many of them that their managers have formed the American Society of Association Executives, which is so large that it owns its own building and publishes its own trade magazine. On a smaller scale numerous associations have offices in state capitals or hire part-time representatives, usually lawyers who do a lucrative business representing many different associations.

Strong economic interests are especially able to support lobbying staff in Washington and state capitols, but a wide range of other associations have a strong presence. They include associations of retired persons, teachers, environmentalists, arms control advocates, churches, local and state governmental officials, civil rights advocates, social workers, and many, many others. Also numerous organizations based elsewhere send delegations to the capital from time to time to lobby for their cause.

A great amount of lobbying is done through coalitions of advocacy organizations, often on opposing sides of legislation. There is a certain drama as various coalitions meet to plan strategy, share knowledge of legislators' positions, draft sign-on letters, stage literature drops, divide the list of swing votes for visits and phone calls, identify legislators for grassroots attention, and work out other lobbying tactics. This goes on parallel to the development and execution of legislative strategy by party leaders, committee chairs, and coalitions within the legislative body itself. Ofttimes cooperation occurs between these outside and inside coalitions.

There are many positive features about this pattern of advocacy in American democracy. It provides legislators with information, often pro and con, on current issues. It brings a variety of viewpoints into consideration. It is a valuable manifestation of the continuous consent of the

governed.

There are also shortcomings that deserve attention. A major gap is the lack of direct representation of the most disadvantaged persons in our society, such as the homeless, welfare recipients, unemployed youth, immigrants lacking citizenship status, and the like. To be sure, there are organizations advocating in their behalf, but disadvantaged persons tend to lack their own organizations. Since they are too poor to pay membership dues and hire their own lobbyist, it would be appropriate to find other means for financing lobbying activities of the least-well represented.

Another remedy is to counterbalance the advantage of wealthy interests through intentional and widespread citizen participation in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, a topic we consider in the next chapter.

Grassroots lobbying. What occurs in Washington and at state capitals is only part of the picture of lobbying in American democracy. A vast amount also occurs in the grassroots arena through a combination of local initiation and mobilization from the capital.

Some grassroots lobbying occurs through initiative of one person or a few individuals. Thus, some local residents discover that they have a common concern which has a legislative remedy or that they oppose some measure under consideration by the state legislature or Congress. They pool their resources, especially their time, and get friends and neighbors to support their position. Or persons belonging to a local organization -- such as a church, service club, a local trade group -- get that organization to take a position on a particular issue. They then get other members to write their representative. These actions are an extension of the things individuals can do, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Some local organizations develop a legislative agenda every year. They discuss it before the legislative session begins, talk with their representative before she or he goes off to the capital, and follow the legislation they are interested in throughout the session. They write letters, get others to write, and keep in touch with their representative by phone and when she or he is in town. They might even send a delegation to the capital at a crucial moment.

If a local organization is a chapter of a national organization, it is likely to add the national agenda to its own priorities of concern. Conversely, many organizations look to their local units as a major resource for grassroots lobbying. They might even spend more money on printed material, postage, and phone calls to mobilize grassroots action than they do in direct lobbying in Washington and the state capitals. National and state offices mail out periodic legislative alerts throughout the legislative session. They also operate computer networks for this purpose and send out faxes for faster communication than U.S. mail. They call for letters and phone calls on specific matters, and

they let local persons know about legislative recesses when representative are likely to be in their home districts.

Offices in Washington organize their mailing lists by congressional districts and the offices at the state capital maintain their lists by legislative district. In this manner they can send out special alerts to selected districts with legislators they want particularly to influence. They organize "phone trees" so that the state or national office can call a few main contacts, who call others, who in turn call others in spreading branches of telephone contacts.

After the session is over national and state offices of advocacy organizations compile voting records on key legislative issues and send them to their grassroots contacts. Locally they are used for further conversation with state legislators and members of Congress. Local groups distribute information about incumbents voting records during the next election campaign.

So, grassroots lobbying is a year-long occupation -- another example of the continuous nature of the consent of the governed.

Lobbying local legislative bodies. Our discussion has concentrated on lobbying state legislatures and Congress. Many of the same practices are applicable in dealing with city councils, county councils, township boards, even school boards. Because the members of these bodies live in town and their offices are located locally, citizens have much easier direct access. They are more likely to know them personally, to be acquainted with relatives and friends of council and board members. Accordingly, greater reliance can be placed on phone calls and direct contact rather than letter writing. Sometimes petitions are useful because the elected official can read down the list of names and recognize many of them. And it's easier to get a city council member to a neighborhood meeting than a member of Congress.

Focus on executive decisions. Although legislative bodies make the basic laws, the elected chief executives -- president, governors, mayors, county executives -- make numerous public policy decisions. So do their department heads and also various boards and commissions.

Many advocacy groups understand this and direct considerable effort trying to influence elected officials and administrators of the executive branch. They attempt to affect the proposed laws and programs that the chief executive and departments intend to submit to the legislative branch. They try to influence the writing of administrative regulations and their application as they affect their constituents. They suggest persons for appointive positions in government. They may try to influence decisions on contracts and other benefits of government.

The principles we discussed previously are applicable. Know who the important decision makers are, including seemingly obscure bureaucrats. Find out how to reach and influence them.

Know the process. Remember that timing is crucial.

And so, my fellow citizens, let us all become advocates of what we believe. Let us organize to express our interests. This is an essential part of the interactive process that keeps the consent of the governed forever fresh.

You who are public officials must realize that rather than being an annoyance, advocacy groups are an asset you. They serve as a fount of knowledge about needs and desires of the population. They reveal pain that requires healing. Often they have good ideas on solutions to public problems, and they sometimes are a useful source of information on technical matters.

Do not be dismayed that advocacy groups tend to be parochial in pressing their views. That's their job. In contrast, your job as a public official is to represent the total community, to achieve a greater whole than the sum of all the special interests. As designated leaders in our representative democracy, you are charged to lead, to balance interests, to take responsibility for the totality, not to be beholden to a particular special interests.²

At the same time, you who are citizen advocates should also keep the common good in view. Sure, your task is to press for your interests, but not so excessively that you harm others or gain an excessive share of public benefits. Often democracy teeters on the brink of chaotic division. So that we don't fall over the edge, we all have a responsibility to work for reasonable compromise that accepts the integrity of even our most obstreperous opponents. After all, they are encompassed in our democratic commitment to respect the worth and dignity of everyone.

² For more on this matter, see chapter 13.

Ernest Wittenberg and Elizabeth Wittenberg, *How to Win in Washington: Very Practical Advice about Lobbying, the Grassroots, and the Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1989. Many short case studies.
Obtained from Frederick Library: 328.73 WIT

The case of Dr. Manasseh Cutler who lobbied the Continental Congress in behalf of the Ohio Company and the Constitutional Convention to protect existing contracts.

"The Cutler way of lobbying was the Washington way for almost 200 years. The rules were simple: gain access to the key legislators, who were the chairmen of the great committees in the House and Senate; convince them of the worth of your cause and let them push it through." p.3

This changed after Watergate-generated congressional reform, which dispersed power and gave junior members greater influence.

"Lobbyists now had to harness voter power, congressional district by congressional district, to win a majority in committee balloting. The courting of the grassroots became a priority for every lobby, from the great corporations to the public interest groups. The grassroots had evolved from a figure of speech into a political reality.

"Companies found that they could widen their impact on the Hill by cultivating networks of customers, suppliers, and employees in as many congressional districts as possible. These local voices could be organized into a chorus that would be heard in the right places in Washington when the need arose." p. 6

"This triangulation system -- lobbyists selling ideas to the folks back home, so the folks back home will convince their elected officials that the lobbyists' ideas deserve -- was nice and simple at the beginning. A few letters, couple of phone calls -- *vox populi*. Then high technology came into the picture, and the Capitol post office and telephone system are still struggling with what IBM hath wrought. As the computer-generated voice of the people was heard throughout the land, the mail coming into congressional offices expressing positions for and against major legislation often had to be weighed instead of counted." p. 6

[This contrast is an exaggeration. Some legislation, such as the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, passed because of grassroots mobilization.]

Chapter 1. "Setting the Pattern for Success"

The Winning Pattern pp. 11-15

Define the issue.

Research the issue.

Recruit allies.

Find a congressional sponsor.

Raise the visibility of the issue.

Support the issue in public hearings.

Monitor the issue tenaciously right through the legislative process.

Chapter 2. "Gaining Entry -- and Access"

Getting a foot in the door

Finding friends on the Hill

The constituent advantage

Convincing the staff

Often better to see staff first because they will prepare the representative or senator. "As the first people to judge the viability of your ideas, the staffers represent your first big hurdle. They will be polite but realistic....You must give them the pros and cons of the issue." p. 22

Access: friendship, contributions, and PACs

"The leading lobbyists make no bones about the fact that they personally contribute everything that the law allows and then sponsor fund-raisers to find other contributors. The Washington consensus is that money -- used in legal ways -- is an absolutely essential ingredient for operating successfully on the Hill. The operative word, again, is access." p. 24

[Public interest groups disprove this.]

"...a vote is seldom bought." James G. O'Hara, says: "By the time someone is elected to Congress, they have pretty well established their philosophy of government. They have run and won on that philosophy as conservatives, liberals, Democrats, Republicans. The money comes in because of their records. You give to the guy who believes as you do." p. 26

Chapter 3. "Getting a Congressional Sponsor"

"You would be well to remember that successful approaches to Congress are as much a product of tact, courtesy, and personal chemistry as they are of voter power, legal niceties, and money. In other words, it pays to be a nice person. The member of Congress who agrees to pull the wagon for your cause will give you time, commitment, prestige, legislative masterminding, staff help, and personal contact with other members. But the essential backup work of lobbying is up to you." p. 32

Part II. "Organizing a Lobbying Campaign"

"To have any chance, a lobbying campaign must have two major components fit together like jigsaw puzzle pieces: an *inside strategy* and an *outside strategy*." p. 39

"Under 10 percent of the approximately 5,000 bills introduced every year make their way into law. The average from 1975 through 1988 was about 6 percent. A truism that has made the fortunes of generations of lobbyists is that there are many more ways to stop a bill than to pass one." p. 40

What Congress responds to, according to John Dingell:

- a grassroots organization
- a logical case
- a lobby that speaks with one voice
- flexibility and compromise

Chapter 4. "Cultivating the Grassroots"

"All Politics is Local"

"Members of Congress are *always* aware that they represent a constituency, and they consider *all* legislative ideas from the parochial viewpoint of, How will it play back home? You *must* have a substantive answer ready for that question, even though you will rarely hear it asked in such a self-seeking form." p. 43

"The theory of grassroots cultivation is simple. It is generally true that when public opinion is behind a bill, the bill passes, and when public opinion doesn't support a bill, it doesn't pass. So if you want to convince Congress that your proposal makes the best public policy on an issue, you will have to find and motivate the voters around the country who can make your case." p. 44

"Sometimes, nothing beats a few minutes face to face with the member for delivering a message." p. 44

"Grassroots movements transcend political parties. Americans may label themselves Republicans or Democrats, but they are far more committed and active when they are bonded by a need, a belief, or a cause." p. 46

According to Jim Wright, " Those of us who have been here for a while are fairly adept at distinguishing genuine interest from artificially generated pressure. As a group, members of Congress are probably more influenced by 10 or 12 well-written, obviously sincere and personal letters than we would be by 1,000 names on a petition." p. 48

"In the course of their legislative duties, members often make widespread use of the grassroots networks to sway the votes of their colleagues." They might work through trade associations for this purpose. p. 48

Organizing the Grassroots

Starting a Grassroots Organization

Chapter 5. "Mobilizing the Grassroots for Business Issues"

Marshaling the voices of consumers

Case studies

Jonathan Robbin as a company called Claritas in Alexandria, Va which divides the U.S. population into 12 social groups living in 40 types of neighborhoods.

Chapter 6. "Winning with Established Grassroots Organizations"

Chapter 7. "Developing an Inside Strategy"

Presenting a logical case

Speaking with one voice

Showing flexibility and willingness to compromise

Chapter 8. "Winning at a Hearing"

James Fitzpatrick of Arnold & Porter says: pp. 111-112

Keep it short

Don't read your statement

Don't be arrogant

Don't guess
Don't be hokey, but illustrate whenever possible.

Chapter 9. "Working with the Media"

Setting the agenda

Reaching the right audience
Choosing your words
Using signed articles (op-ed) effectively

Getting your story across

Finding a local news slant

"On a scale of 1 to 10, lobbyist Tommy Boggs estimates that hometown papers rate a 9 in terms of influencing a legislator, whereas the national papers and television news programs come up no higher than a 6 or a 7." p. 123

Tactics and pitfalls pp. 124-7

Make the news fit to print
Don't count on friendship
Study the media you want to crack
Don't phone at deadline times
Schedule press conferences carefully
Make press releases focused and accurate

Chapter 10. "Finding Allies"

Building a coalition

Chapter 11. "Resurrecting a Lost Cause"

Keeping your issue in play

Changing tactics
Biding your time

Diving into think tanks

Several pages copied.

-30-

Chapter 12. Interacting with Public Officials

A curious phenomenon is occurring in the United States nowadays. Complaints about public officials are frequent and vociferous. People are saying, "They don't care. They can't be trusted. They don't respond to what we want." Yet American government at all levels -- local, state, national -- is among the most accessible governments in the world. We have in place dozens upon dozens of methods for achieving regular, two-way interchange between citizens and public officials.

Therefore, concerned citizens should take advantage of the host of opportunities for citizen participation that are built into our governing system. Some arrangements, such as public hearings and town meetings, are open to all who want to attend. Other forms, such as advisory committees and neighborhood councils, provide a kind of representative participation. Altogether they are further manifestation of continuous interaction that contributes to the consent of the governed.

But even as we take pride in our varied methods of citizen participation, we shouldn't rest on our laurels. We should acknowledge that opportunities for participation are uneven among different cities, counties, states, and federal agencies. Some are much more hospitable to citizen participation than others. Moreover, some segments of our citizenry are less involved than others, such as poor people, persons with limited English facility, and newer immigrants. So we can do better. Citizens and public officials can work together to achieve improvements.

In this chapter we examine ways citizens can interact with executive branch officials, both elected and appointed, on a day-to-day basis. In the next chapter we extend our examination by giving particular attention to achieving continuity of participation in processes that stretch over many months.

ADEQUATE INFORMATION

Effective citizen participation depends upon the availability of adequate and timely information for the citizenry.

Knowledge is power. The most knowledgeable persons -- public officials and citizen advocates alike -- have an advantage when decisions are made. Therefore, we should insist that all information pertinent to pending policy decisions be fully available to all citizens who want to know.

We should also insist that truth telling be an ethical standard for all public officials. We the people, who are sovereign, expect to know all the facts. Even bad news. In our personal lives we live with the good and the bad, so we can do likewise in our public life. The trust relationship that undergirds democracy requires full availability of pertinent information related to policy decisions and

program results.

To whom and how should information be made available? There is a range of answers.

Obviously it would be too expensive to send every document to every citizen, but **some kinds of information can be made directly available to a large universe.** Governmental agencies regularly send mailings to large numbers of people in the form of tax bills, assessment notices, social security checks, and other matters. From time to time brief information on pending issues could be included. Recipients can be told where they can obtain fuller information.

State and local governments by law are often required to print **legal notices** on certain matters in newspapers of general distribution. However, these notices usually appear in fine print in the classified section and are read by scarcely anyone except lawyers. To announce proposed major undertakings, such as new highways, community development projects, and other large capital improvement projects, it would be preferable to put **display ads** in the news section

The national government publishes the *Federal Register* on a daily (?) basis to announce all proposed and adopted regulations. It indicates when and where comments can be made. In 1991 the *Federal Register* ran to ____ pages [update for 1992], so it takes diligence to follow it and ferret out particular kinds of information. Many advocacy organizations in Washington do this, and it can be done by organizations based elsewhere.

Public agencies can go beyond legal requirements for notices by maintaining **mailing lists** of organizations and individuals who request to be kept abreast of particular subjects. For instance, neighborhood and civic associations which want to know about proposed zoning changes; citizen organizations interested in environmental regulations and enterprises affected by such regulations; diverse organizations in the health field which have an interest in policy changes. An agency can take initiative to build its mailing list and also be open to citizen requests to be on the list. Periodic updating can occur to weed out those no longer interested.

Information depositories can be created in public libraries and elsewhere so that concerned citizens have easy access to key reports and other documents. For issues drawing a lot of attention, an agency can establish a **hot line** -- an announced telephone number where trained personnel are available to answer pertinent questions. **Public channels on cable television** offer further opportunities.

Numerous governmental jurisdictions and public agencies follow some or all of these practices. We citizens need to stimulate the laggards to do a better job of disseminating relevant information.

At the same time we citizens have an obligation to use the information that's available to us.

We can do so as individuals and through committees and associations engaged in dialogue with public officials (we'll get to methods in a moment).

When public agencies are uncooperative, we can turn to the federal **Freedom of Information Act** and state and local counterparts, which require public officials to provide requested information within a reasonable time. If they still refuse, we can ask our legislators to help us. Sometimes we may need to go to court to force out the information we want. And we can remember this lack of cooperation at the next election.

We can also turn to a potential ally: the **news media**. It's the business of newspapers, news magazines, television, and radio to obtain, publish, and broadcast information of all kinds. By their nature they are usually far ahead of most citizen organizations in the quest for public information and in the search for wrongdoing by public officials. Sometimes, though, they are excessive in their investigation of private lives of public officials and in use of other smear tactics. We shouldn't condone these media excesses, and indeed should condemn them, but we can encourage and make use of legitimate investigative journalism.

We can also initiate our own investigations of suspected mismanagement and malfeasance by public officials. A number of citizen organizations in Washington, in state capitals, and major cities and county seats perform this function. It's at the adversary end of the spectrum of citizen/public official relationships but is appropriate when officials are uncooperative.

PARTICIPATION OPEN TO ALL

Gaining information is the first step for citizens who want to influence public policy. This needs to be followed by **timely input**. Emphasis should be on *timely*. As we noted in chapter 9, policy making often occurs in stages. To be effective citizen input at each stage must occur when decisions are still open. It's much easier to influence a public officials who hasn't taken a public position on a specific policy than trying to change her or his announced position.

Advocacy organizations and individual citizens don't have to be asked to express their opinion to public officials. They can and do take the initiative through lobbying techniques, as discussed in chapter 11. They can also take advantage of a variety of arrangements through which public agencies offer all interested citizens an opportunity to make their views known on proposed plans and pending policy decisions. Although only a small minority of citizens may choose to participate in this manner, the opportunity is open to everyone without screening by public officials.

Views and Comments

Numerous public programs of a planning nature publish proposed plans and ask for public

comment. For example, city and county master plans, community development projects, construction of schools and recreation facilities, highways and bridges, improvements of rivers and ports, and other kinds of public construction. This provides an opportunity for individuals and advocacy organizations to make their views known.

At best alert citizen organizations can anticipate these requests for comments by keeping track of what public agencies are planning. This they can do by talking informally with agency staff who have responsibility for preparing plans. Citizens can even offer their views on uncompleted plans.

They can also undertake their own studies and work out a consensus on what views they want to express during the formal comment period when it arrives. This period may be only 30 or 60 days. In this short time voluntary organizations may be hard pressed to study the plan and come to agreement on whether to support, oppose, or suggest modification. Anticipation is essential for citizen effectiveness.

Sometimes citizens are invited to provide written comment on proposed plans. On other occasions they can offer testimony at public hearings and participate in community meetings, workshops, and conferences. These events provide opportunities to achieve face-to-face interchange with public officials.

Public Hearings.

Public boards and commissions and staff units of public agencies often use formal hearings as a means of achieving citizen input. When done properly, the hearing body provides public notice sufficiently in advance so that potential witnesses can prepare testimony. The notice should state the purpose of the hearing and indicate where pertinent background documents are available. The hearing should be at a time and place that's convenient for potential witnesses. In localities this might encompass evening and Saturday hearings and be located in neighborhoods particularly affected by the proposed plan.

From a public agency's perspective hearings are valuable as a means of assessing public opinion on proposed plans and administrative policies. They offer agency board members and staff an opportunity to hear a wide range of opinions and to gauge the depth of feelings on the issue at hand. Hearings can also provide new information and expert analysis of pending proposals. Persons on the hearing panel can ask questions and engage in dialogue with witnesses.

Some hearings are open to all comers and stay in session as long as there are witnesses. Other hearings permit only invited witnesses to testify but do allow other interested parties to file written testimony for the record. Many hearings are in the middle between these two extreme.

Where numerous witnesses want to testify, the hearing panel usually allows only brief oral testimony from each witness (say, three to five minutes) and rarely asks questions. After eight to twelve hours panel members are saturated and exhausted. Where oral testimony is restricted to agency representatives and outside technical experts (and this occurs often in congressional hearings), the views of grassroots citizens and even public interest advocacy organizations are rarely heard.

The best hearings achieve a balance between too much and too little by scheduling witnesses who are likely to provide a fair cross-section of perspectives on the issue at hand and to allow sufficient time for panel members to ask questions. Sometimes persons with a range of views are at the witness table at the same time, and the panel benefits from listening to them debate. Afterward panel members can read written testimony submitted by persons who weren't able to testify.

Citizens who want to be effective at public hearings should make careful preparation. They should study the proposal meticulously, get the facts straight, analyze arguments for and against the plan, and perhaps develop a counter proposal. They should select an articulate person to represent them, though not necessarily a professional (for grassroots persons-of-the-people are often the most effective witnesses). They can prepare visual material and offer a written statement to the hearing panel that is longer in length than their oral presentation.

Depending upon the nature of the hearing, a citizen organization might assemble a sizable group of supporters in the hearing room. Then when their witness is testifying, he or she might ask that all who share the organization's point of view to please stand up. But there's a delicate balance between showing broad support and trying to intimidate the panel with a raucous crowd. Hearing officers are human and may react negatively to coercive tactics, thereby harming the cause of the citizen advocates.

As to the hearing panel, attentive listening is essential. If panel members treat the hearing as a pro-forma, it-doesn't-make-any-difference event, its value is lost and witnesses become alienated over the process. If nothing comes of the hearing or the dominant opinion of witnesses is ignored without explanation, citizen cynicism increases.

Sometimes hearings on highly charged issues, such as abortion, racial integration, or location of a highway or public facility considered undesirable (such as prison, sewage treatment plant, incinerator), produce so much rancor that they are counterproductive. To lessen this danger, adequate explanation of proposed policies should be presented and a broad range of witnesses should be called to testify. The presiding officer should be fair and unbiased but also should insist upon decorum on the part of the audience. Democracy in action can be stormy, but leaders need to insist upon mutual personal respect among persons with opposing viewpoints.

Even better is to achieve a substantial amount of citizen participation long before a project

reaches the hearing stage, including methods designed to mediate differences and achieve as broad a consensus as possible. Ideas along these lines are offered in the next chapter.

Community Meetings

Another way for achieving dialogue between citizens and public officials is through community meetings (sometimes called town meetings). They are less formal than public hearings and generally permit greater two-way interchange.

Often a citizen organization schedules a community meeting and invites legislators and other public officials to attend. This may be a regular meeting of the organization or one called especially for this purpose. Some legislators and elected chief executives organize their own town meetings. Having a citizen organization to serve as the primary sponsor, rather than a public official, is likely to achieve greater openness in dealing with a full panoply of citizen concerns. But this doesn't preclude public officials from taking the lead where citizens are not holding community meetings to meet with government representatives.

Having a good community meeting requires careful preparation. The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated, and the span of the agenda should be proportional to the anticipated length of the meeting. If there are to be speeches or panel presentations, speakers should understand how long they may speak. Impromptu speakers from the floor should also have this understanding. Invited public officials should be told in advance how the meeting will proceed and what is expected of them. They might be asked to speak first and then respond to questions. Or citizen presenters might go first and the public official asked to respond to what they have said.

Whatever the order of agenda, emphasis should be upon honest dialogue. To be avoided is mere propaganda by public agencies and malicious haranguing by citizens. Debate can be vigorous without becoming nasty. Democracy depends upon even the staunchest adversaries recognizing that their opponents have worth and dignity as human beings.

Workshops and Conferences

Greater depth for study, education, and dialogue can occur through workshops and conferences. They are generally longer than community meetings and give more people opportunity to express their views.

Workshops can draw in resource persons from citizen organizations, public agencies, colleges, universities, and other institutions as resource persons. However, the sessions should not be dominated by outside experts, for citizens need a chance to ask questions, share information they have, and offer their opinions.

Often workshops are held as part of a larger conference. Part of the conference is devoted to sets of simultaneous workshops, and part is used for plenary sessions featuring speakers, panels, and reports from workshops. Some conferences are structured to come up with specific recommendations on public policy issues. In this case a drafting committee can prepare resolutions for presentation to the whole body.

Legislators, elected chief executives, and department heads can be invited to speak to the conference. They might serve as keynote speaker, respondent to workshop reports, or closing speaker. There can be opportunity for questions and comments from the floor.

Where a conference comes up with positions on policy proposals, these recommendations can be presented to public officials who are present. They can also be offered in writing and personally after the conference is over.

Some conferences are held not to address public officials directly but rather are organized so that citizens can work out their positions on public issues. Sometimes conferences are called as a means of building stronger coalitions among like-minded organizations.

Conferences can also be used to bring together groups which seem to be in contention with one another, such as racial and ethnic groups, factions within neighborhood organizations, and advocacy groups of different persuasion (for instance, those with differing approaches to dealing with crime). Workshops at such conferences facilitate two-way education and dialogue. Earnest, face-to-face conversation replaces shouting from a distance. Sometimes bargaining can occur and compromise positions can be worked out. Mutual acceptance of one another and better understanding can develop even if individuals and groups continue to disagree on particular issues.

Interactive Television

[To be written]

REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION

In addition to these methods of citizen participation open to all, public agencies establish arrangements that produce a kind of representative participation. A relative small number of citizens participate intensely. They represent the broader citizenry just as elected members of legislative bodies represent the broader electorate.

In some of these arrangements public officials appoint the citizen representatives, though often

in consultation with leaders of citizen organizations. In other cases citizens choose their own representatives, either directly or through a citizen organization. Some arrangements have a combination of public official-appointed and citizen-selected membership.

In this manner the representative basis of government is expanded manifold. For instance, a city may have eleven members on city council but also a dozen citywide advisory committees for major operating departments, each with 15 members appointed by the department head, and 15 neighborhood councils, each with 21 members elected by residents. This brings over 500 citizens into an ongoing advisory relationship with city government.

County governments likewise make use of advisory bodies, though not many have officially recognized neighborhood councils. Advisory bodies are commonplace with state and federal agencies, and governors and the president appoint citizen commissions with specific assignments. Citizen-selected advisory bodies are found more often in local government than in the broader domains of state and national government.

Appointed by Public Officials

City and county departments, state and federal agencies frequently set up advisory bodies in order to engage in dialogue with representatives of varied interests and to seek advice on particular issues. Some of them are permanent, and members are appointed for specified terms. Others are temporary and dissolve as soon as their assignment is completed. Some advisory bodies have full-time staff assigned to assist them while others meet with top officials but receive no staff support.

Most commonly they are called "advisory committees", reflecting that they offer advice but do not make official policy. Some are referred to as "task forces" or "working groups", indicating that they have a short-term assignment, perhaps of a technical nature. Members of such working groups tend to have practical knowledge of the subject matter.

Sometimes a body is designated "commission" with an assignment to grapple with some perplexing public issue or controversial matter where a public consensus is lacking. Its membership is usually composed of well-known persons who represent major interests. Its recommendations receive considerable publicity while the typical advisory committee and working group functions more internally.

From the viewpoint of effective citizen participation, advisory bodies display a wide range. Some are tightly controlled, manipulated by public officials, and serve to rubber stamp what the agency has already determined. Others achieve plentiful give-and-take among the participants and between members and public officials, and they have genuine input into public decisions. Some are constituted with a limited membership drawn from a few special interests or community elite.

Others are diverse and broadly representative.

The most important variable producing these differences is the attitude of the agency head, or in some cases the elected chief executive. Many public officials have a sincere commitment to public participation in formulating agency policy and welcome the wisdom that advisory committee members offer. They also understand that members can serve as buffer for controversial but necessary policy changes and can help build support for legislative approval of agency recommendations. Advisory committee members are willing to play these roles if their participation has been genuine.

In contrast some public officials want wholly captive advisory committees, expected to bless whatever the agency head wants to do without much input or debate. Other officials want none at all, but if circumstances dictate that they have one, they make it a pro forma operation. Citizens can remember which is which at the next election.

An agency that wants to make effective use of advisory committees will take great care to achieve broad representation of diverse interests related to the subject of concern, including opposing viewpoints. Committee members will receive background information on issues and proposals prior to meetings. Meetings will be held with sufficient frequency and length to achieve full discussion. Committee recommendations will be forthcoming prior to the agency's decision on the issue at hand.

A second major variable is the attitude of the citizen participants. For an advisory committee to be effective its members must be willing to study the issues and be diligent in attendance. Although members will want to articulate their views forcefully, they also need to listen carefully to other points of view and do their best to seek a consensus that may require compromises by different members. In some circumstances, a minority report may be in order, but as far as possible mutual accommodation is preferred. Bargaining rather than guerrilla warfare should be the mode.

Citizens need to understand that their role is advisory, that final decisions will be made by a public official or legislative body. An advisory committee isn't a form of citizen control, but it does place citizens within the governing coalition with access to ultimate decision makers. Furthermore, citizens retain their right of advocacy through lobbying and other methods of influence in their life beyond committee membership.

There are, however, some citizen boards that go beyond the advisory role and have full policy-making responsibility. They act as the governing board of an agency that deals with a particular governmental function. This is the case with boards of education, some of them elected, some appointed by an executive official. City and county planning commissions and boards of public health are other examples, and many state governments have commissions as the policy board for operating departments.

These citizen policy boards have a much a larger measure of control than the typical advisory committee, but they are usually under budgetary control of the chief executive and the legislative body. However, some school boards and governing bodies of special district have tax powers. Because of their policy-making authority, these kinds of citizen boards themselves need to employ methods of citizen participation in their affairs. Some of them do in fact make use of advisory committees and public hearings.

Chosen by Citizens

Advisory bodies appointed by public officials provide an indirect kind of representation. Those represented don't get to choose who represents them, though sometimes they are consulted and may even push for certain nominees. The other arrangement is for citizens and citizen organizations to choose their own representatives. This method has become a more common approach during the past thirty years.

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s was the major stimulus. As progress was made in voting rights and equal access to public accommodations, human rights activists turned their attention to how government programs operated and who controlled them. This concern was reflected in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which required that the Community Action Program achieve "maximum feasible participation of residents of areas and members of groups served." The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) encouraged that at least one-third of community action agency (CAA) boards consist of representatives of the poor. Congress made this a part of the law in 1966. The following year Congress, reacting to pressure from mayors and county commissioners, added a requirement that at least one-third of CAA boards consist of local governmental officials but retained the requirement for representation for the poor.

Thereafter, citizen participation requirements entered many of President Johnson's Great Society programs. They were retained though somewhat reshaped in President Nixon's New Federalism [check name]. In 1978 the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental identified 155 federal grant programs mandating citizen participation. Of these 89 required boards or committees with public representation, including 24 that gave these bodies some decision-making authority. In many cases program constituents or citizen organizations named their own representatives.¹ The Reagan Administration in its quest for deregulation curtailed many of the citizen participation requirements, but most localities have preserved some form of participation. They understand its value, and furthermore the participants will not allow themselves to be set aside.

¹ Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, *Citizen Participation in the Federal System*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979. pp. 112-115.

Another product of the '60s was the formation of neighborhood corporations to run social services and community development corporations, based in neighborhoods, to develop housing and business enterprises. They were supported by federal funds and foundation grants. Their boards were elected by residents so that there was complete community control within the framework of grant conditions. In this manner they entered the nonprofit sector, separate from government though with substantial inflow of public funds. Most of them are still flourishing in the 1990s, though financial support has ebbed.

In the late '60s parents and other citizens sought greater community control of public schools, especially in subdistricts of large cities. This occurred, however, only in New York and Detroit, and the latter abandoned this approach a decade later. This interest has revived in the '90s, but with sharper focus on individual schools. In some localities parents and neighborhood residents are electing representatives to neighborhood school boards that have some policy-making authority, though seldom with budgetary control. For pre-school education Head Start units throughout the nation have advisory committees composed of persons chosen by the parents.

In the 1970s a number of city governments on their own initiative set up networks of neighborhood councils, elected by residents. Others gave official recognition to existing neighborhood associations which had open membership and direct election of officers. These neighborhood councils and recognized neighborhood associations then took on an advisory relationship with city agencies on matters affecting their neighborhoods. They received zoning proposals and public facility plans for comment. They worked with the city planning agency in developing neighborhood plans. In some cities they had input into the city budget at an early stage. This embodiment of grassroots democracy is so important that chapter 18 gives fuller treatment to neighborhood councils.

Much of the growth of resident-chosen representation has occurred in a decentralization mode: in neighborhoods and individual schools, for instance. From this foundation it has extended outward by allowing neighborhood councils to appoint their own representatives to agency advisory committees, or at least to nominate persons for agency appointment. By extension other community organizations have gained a similar opportunity. The advisory committee may remain only an advisory body, but representation comes more directly from citizens and is not restricted solely to selection by public officials.

For governments of broader jurisdictions -- the states and federal agencies -- selection of advisory committees by citizen organizations is less common.

STAFF UNITS

Many governmental agencies have staff units to facilitate citizen participation. This is necessary if they are serious about achieving effective citizen participation.

City governments usually have a mayor's office of information and complaints (the precise name varies), and county governments have a counterpart. They relate mainly to service delivery and not to policy formation. Mayors, county executives, and city and county managers are more likely to have a separate staff to assist them in community relations.

Cities with neighborhood councils have a neighborhood liaison office to work with them. Sometimes this unit provides direct staff support to neighborhood councils through field offices. In other cases it gives funds to neighborhood councils so that they can hire their own staff or consultants.

Local public agencies that seek citizen input into project and program planning, such as city planning departments and community development agencies, may assign staff to facilitate this process.

Many state agencies also have staff assigned to working with citizens. Federal agencies likewise, with an interesting evolution.

After a ten-year growth of federal citizen participation requirements, the Carter Administration tried to consolidate these efforts and achieve greater commonality among the federal departments. A Council on [complete] function to bring together agency staff working on this matter. Most of the units were referred to as "office of consumer affairs" [check this]. The Reagan Administration, though, discontinued the Council, and the departmental offices that continued tended to change their name to "public affairs".

This nomenclature is significant, for it reveals attitudes. The Carter Administration tended to look at citizens as consumers of governmental services. The Reagan Administration was more interested in public affairs, as in "public relations", that is, in selling programs to generate support, not engage in dialogue and achieve an advisory relationship. More recently in the 1992 presidential campaign Ross Perot kept talking about the people as the "owners" of the government. His stressed that government belongs to the people.

None of these terms is as good as plain and simple "citizen". Citizens in a representative democracy are sovereign. They choose who governs, and they play numerous roles in governance, as this book points out. They also have responsibilities to carry out, starting with voting, continuing through ongoing interrelationships with public officials, and at the same time engaging in a variety of independent civic activities that undergird democracy. This dual role of ultimate controller and active participant in civic life characterizes the citizen. This is different than either a consumer or an owner, and widely at variance with an object of public relations.

OBSERVATIONS

Thus, there are numerous ways citizens can interact with public officials. With this access citizens have opportunities to affect policy decisions as they are being formulated and before they are final. But two major challenges remain.

The first challenge is to achieve greater citizen participation in governmental jurisdictions where little is invited by elected and appointed officials.

Generally there is a correlation between size of area served and degree of participation. Small towns gain participation informally. Medium-size cities need more formal arrangements. Larger cities and suburban counties institute various processes and structures for citizen participation, but some do much better than others. State agencies have fewer arrangements, though there is considerable variation among the states. Federal agencies have the least amount of structured citizen involvement, especially following a dozen years of the Reagan and Bush Administrations that put aside gains of the previous 16 years.

It's up to citizens to push the laggards to achieve more openness and greater citizen participation. In addition, elected chief executives, department heads, and legislators can take initiatives to do a more thorough job of involving citizens.

The second challenge is to achieve greater involvement of poor people. Because of economic mobility many leaders who arose in the '60s and '70s have moved out of the poorest neighborhoods. Cutbacks in funding for neighborhood organizing and services has removed a significant source of leadership recruitment and training. It's not that residents lack leaders with entrepreneurial capacity (note the intricate pattern of youth gangs and drug-selling operations). Rather public service resources have declined so that there are fewer opportunities for natural leaders to display and enhance their skills in public service activities. We need to invest more in developing civic leadership in left-out neighborhoods.

Partly it's a matter of values. We value honesty in government, so we spend considerable funds for financial auditing. We value public safety, so we spend vast sums on law enforcement. If we value democracy as much as we claim, we would be willing to invest much more in the enhancement of grassroots democracy. We would assign more public dollars to neighborhood councils and other methods of citizen participation. It would be a wise investment in the future of American democracy.

Chapter 13. Achieving Continuity of Participation

Much of what citizens do to influence public policy is episodic. They write letters or make phone calls to express their views on specific issues. They contact public officials to state their grievances, and they ask their elected representatives for help in dealing with government. They attend meetings where officials are speaking, and occasionally they appear at public hearings. In doing these things citizens oftentimes act individually, but sometimes they join with others in advocacy organizations.

The focus of this kind of citizen involvement tends to be issues of the moment, or it relates to decision-making processes at particular points in time. Citizens and advocacy organizations decide for themselves when to get involved, when to offer views and present their own policy proposals. Public officials don't screen who may participate. Open opportunities for this kind of public involvement is essential in a democracy.

But governmental decision making is much more than a collection of episodes. Decisions are made through processes that occur through a series of connected stages, carried out over the course of weeks and months. Actors may differ from one stage to the next, but some public officials are likely to be involved throughout the process to provide coherence and insure continuity.

If citizens are to be involved meaningfully in such processes, they likewise need ways to achieve continuity of participation. This is most likely to happen through some variety of representative participation that can achieve sustained involvement.

There is a considerable body of experience of citizens and public officials working together systematically through successive stages of decision making. It might be a recurring process, such as budget making that occurs annually. It might be a task with regular sequences, such as producing a community plan or designing a public facility. It might consist of taking up a particular problem, analyzing causes, considering possible remedies, and coming to agreement on solutions.

Experience with practices of this sort is most common and strongest in local government, but some state and federal agencies also make use of such processes. To broaden our understanding let us review some approaches related to three endeavors: neighborhood planning, local budget-making, and water resource planning.

Neighborhood Planning

Since the end of World War II most American cities have made concerted efforts to improve the physical condition of their neighborhoods. To do so, they have produced neighborhood plans

calling for one or more kinds of treatment: redevelopment (clearance and rebuilding), renewal (rehabilitating most of the housing stock, selective clearance and new construction, upgrading community facilities), and preservation (maintaining basically sound properties).

Fifty years ago neighborhood planning in most cities was handled by professional planners on the staff of the city planning commission. They demarcated neighborhood boundaries, collected data, defined problems, established goals and objectives, and laid out specific plans. At this stage they published the plan and presented it to neighborhood residents for their consideration. Some cities, however, involved a committee of residents in earlier planning stages. This practice has grown.

In the 1960s advocacy planning emerged in a few locales as an alternative approach. Trained planners helped residents draw up their own plan. The residents then presented it to city government, asserted pressure and bargained to have it adopted. Although such independent planning never became widespread, it showed the value of residents having expert assistance as they participated in neighborhood planning.

In the 1990s a middle-ground approach has become the preferred practice in most cities. A representative committee of residents works with city planners from the earliest stage, sometimes with the assistance of their own planner. In this manner they achieve continuity of participation until the plan is adopted and implementation commences.

A key to this approach is having a neighborhood planning committee that truly represents diverse viewpoints within the neighborhood. This can be accomplished through selection by a broad-based neighborhood association or by direct election by residents. If significant segments are omitted by this process, the initial committee can add other members. Selection in some manner by the residents is preferred to appointment by the mayor, city council, or other public official.¹

Today the neighborhood planning agenda is much broader than it was fifty years ago. It encompasses not only housing and other physical aspects of the neighborhood but also a variety of social and economic issues, such as jobs, business opportunities, crime, welfare, schools, and health care. The planning seeks to make a rational analysis of neighborhood problems and opportunities, based upon objective data and an understanding of people's feelings and neighborhood social patterns.

¹ For more on selection methods and other aspects of neighborhood planning, see William M. Rohe and Lauren G. Gates, *Planning with Neighborhoods* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

Details of neighborhood planning differ from place to place but are likely to include four steps:²

- Identify problems and issues
- Study problems
- Develop plans to solve problems
- Implement the plan

Problem identification is partly subjective, partly objective. Residents' perceptions are a crucial ingredient: what bothers them, what they would like their neighborhood to become, what obstacles they must overcome. There are also facts available on housing conditions, unemployment, welfare, school achievement, health, crime rates, traffic, and other matters. A neighborhood planning committee can deal with perceptions by holding public hearings, meeting with small groups, sending out questionnaires, and sponsoring door-to-door surveys. Simultaneously staff, whether city or neighborhood-based, can assemble relevant data.

Studying problems provides opportunities to broaden involvement in the planning process. Task forces on various issues can draw in persons with special knowledge and concern: merchants, employers, parents, teachers, youth leaders, youth themselves, seniors, field personnel of city departments, and others. Task force members can fan out to talk with other people. Task forces can sponsor public meetings open to anyone who wants to offer ideas on problems and their solutions.

Staff of public and private agency can feed in their own analyses and proposals to the neighborhood planning committee.

² Derived from Urban Systems Research & Engineering, Inc., *Neighborhood Planning Primer* (Washington: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1980).

As problems come into sharper focus and solutions begin to emerge, the neighborhood planning committee and the staff assisting it can begin to formulate the neighborhood plan, or plans for different components. The plan might encompass the following elements:³

- *Goals.* General statements of what the group wants to accomplish in each issue area.
- *Objectives.* Quantifiable goals to specify the level of accomplishment and target date.
- *Strategies.* The directions to take to reach the goals and objectives.
- *Projects and programs.* Specific activities to achieve the goals and who will be responsible.
- *Policies.* Guidelines or restrictions on activities that will be undertaken.
- *Priorities.* The relative emphasis placed on specific projects or goals.
- *Resources.* Funds, personnel (paid and volunteer), and material needed for projects and programs.

The neighborhood planning committee may want to hold a series of meetings to present the plan to residents, receive comments, and then make revisions. If public funding is expected, it is likely that the plan will have to go to one or more public bodies for consideration: planning commission, community development agency, budget bureau, mayor, city council. One or more of these bodies may be required to hold a public hearing. This will give the neighborhood committee, residents, and other interested persons to offer their view publicly.

In the process of reviewing the neighborhood plan, a public agency, the mayor, the manager, or city council officials may want to make modifications in matters where they have jurisdiction. Optimally they will do this in consultation with the neighborhood planning committee, perhaps through bargaining and consensus-seeking.

If the neighborhood planning process goes smoothly, there will be a lot of consultation at all stages: citizens consulting with public officials just as they expect public officials to consult with them. Give-and-take of this sort can produce adjustments and compromises that yields a plan with widespread support. Experience in numerous cities indicates that this is possible.

The planning process may be longer because of extensive participation, but adoption will be easier. Moreover, it's likely that the plan will be implemented quicker than occurs when citizens become aware of proposals late in the process and stir up a storm to block unwanted elements. Continuity of citizen participation from beginning to end enhances democracy and achieves better results in solving community problems. Citizens who have help draw up plans will be full and willing participants in its implementation.

Local Budget Making

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

The annual budget is probably the most important policy document adopted by governmental jurisdictions. By allocating resources it determines what various public agencies will do in the coming year. By indicating revenue sources it indicates who will pay for services, capital projects, and other governmental activities.

In most governmental units in the United States today, the budget is drawn up by the chief executive and adopted by the legislative body. The chief executive may be mayor, county executive, city or county manager, governor, president, superintendent of school, or chief administrator of a special district. The legislative body is city or county council, state legislature, Congress, school board, or special district commission. Usually the chief executive is assisted by a budget officer, who seeks requests from operating departments and draws them together into a comprehensive budget. The chief executive submits the budget to the legislative body and publishes it for public consideration. The legislative body holds public hearings for departmental representatives and citizens, makes revisions it deems appropriate, perhaps following negotiations with the chief executive, and then adopts the budget.

In this typical process citizen involvement usually doesn't occur until fairly late. After the budget is published, citizens analyze it, testify at public hearings of the legislative body, and lobby legislators to support certain items or to adopt particular amendments. However, sophisticated advocacy organizations may be involved much earlier by contacting specific departments and asking them to seek funding for a particular service or project in the departmental budget requests. They may even carry their advocacy to the chief executive.

In this pattern citizens may be able to affect certain aspects of the budget, but they have very little influence on overall budget priorities. Because most budgets have to balance expenditures and revenues (the federal government is an exception), it is difficult to make major changes after the budget has been published. An increased expenditure for one item has to be balanced by a decrease elsewhere, or revenue increases, and that's hard to accomplish that late in the budgetary process.

Several cities in the United States, however, are an exception to this typical pattern. They invite citizens to participate from the earliest stage as working partners, and indeed use public funds to make this possible. They include New York, Dayton, St. Paul, and Portland, Oregon. We can learn from their experience.

Several ingredients are common to the budgetary process in these cities. First, citizens have their own organizations to work out priorities and make budget recommendations. Most frequently these are neighborhood associations or district councils of neighborhood representatives, but sometimes citywide organizations and coalitions with a particular focus, such as social welfare, economic development, and environment also get involved. Second, these citizen organizations

usually have staff support. This might come from their own staff, consultants they hire, or personnel assigned by a public agency.

Third, city government has an office designated to receive citizen budgetary proposals, to transmit them to the budget office and city departments, to provide feedback to citizens on departmental response. This citizen liaison office sometimes provides technical assistance to citizen associations or allocates funds for their use. Fourth, city departments accept the idea of citizen input early in the budgetary process and work within that framework. Fifth, this process is scheduled over a sufficiently long period to allow time for meaningful citizen involvement to occur.

How it works can be illustrated by going through the stages of the budgetary process and indicating how neighborhood organizations are involved.

Stage One: Advance Preparation. The neighborhood organization either has a neighborhood plan upon which to base its recommendations or has a system to determine priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. This might occur through citizen surveys, neighborhood meetings, committee meetings, or a combination. Citizens are doing this at the same time that city departments are engaged in their own advanced preparations.

Stage Two: Departmental Requests. Just before city departments start working out their budget in detail, neighborhood organizations submit their proposals to the city liaison agency, which transmits them to the respective departments. In this manner city departments consider neighborhood proposals simultaneously with proposals from their own bureaus. Departments inform the citizen liaison office how they respond to neighborhood requests, and that office provides feedback to the neighborhood organizations.

Stage Three: Budget Office Review. While the budget office is reviewing departmental request, a citywide citizen advisory committee or a set of citizen task forces is also reviewing budget requests that have come from departments, neighborhood organizations, and other citizen organizations. The budget office takes into consideration comments and recommendations from the citizen advisory bodies.

Stage Four: Chief Executive Review. As the earlier stages have proceeded, the mayor or city manager is kept abreast of citizen recommendations as well as departmental requests and provides guidance to the budget office on how to respond. The chief executive takes into consideration these varied requests in making final decisions on the budget to submit to city council.

Stage Five: Council Determination. As in other cities, neighborhood organizations and other citizen groups send representatives to council hearings on the budget. But having been intimately involved during earlier stages, this is a less crucial moment for them. They are

likely to be supportive of the total budget even though not everything they requested is included, though sometimes they will propose adjustments and upon occasion oppose certain elements.

Stage Six: Implementation. Citizen organizations are less involved in the implementation stage, but a citywide advisory committee may be consulted about major proposed changes in big ticket items, such as capital improvement projects.

Stage Seven: Audit. Although citizen organizations usually don't get involved in the financial audit project, neighborhood organizations may have an evaluation system of their own to watch over the projects they proposed and provide feedback for the next budgetary cycle.

In cities providing roles for citizens throughout the budgetary process, there is constant interchange between citizens and public officials at all stages. Final decision-making authority remains with the chief executive and city council, but there is strong citizen input early in the process when it can be truly influential.

Water Resource Planning

[To be added: discussion of process used by Corps of Army Engineers.]

Benefits and Costs

These illustrations of citizen involvement in community planning, local budget making, and natural resource planning could be expanded to encompass many other cases where citizens have achieved deep and steady participation in development of public policy.

There are a number of benefits to this approach. By involving persons most affected, problems can be better defined. Citizens often have good ideas for solutions, and they can provide feedback on public agency proposals at an early stage when modifications can be made and unsound ideas dropped. The interchange provides opportunities for conflict resolution and consensus building. The process may broaden support for public policy while at the same time encouraging citizens to undertake their own, complementary activities. It is yet another way for achieving continuous, interactive consent of the governed.

Involvement in budget making and other citizen participation processes serve as a school for democracy. Many people persons gain their first opportunity for involvement in public life. They learn the give and take of decision making. New talent develops. Some move on to other civic activities, some run for public office, and others take appointive positions with government. In the last thirty years this has been a particularly important method for leadership development among

African Americans, Hispanics, and recent immigrant groups.

There are costs. Decision making may take longer. There are expenses for staff, reports, and meeting facilities. Where public officials give only lip service to the process and ignore citizen views, alienation and distrust may increase.

The way around the time factor is to extend the planning schedule to allow sufficient time for participation. If done properly, widespread citizen support will develop for budgets and projects. In contrast, quite a few projects planned without participation are blocked by citizen opposition at a late stage and the whole planning expense is wasted.

NEW APPLICATIONS

This and the previous chapter have highlighted some of the best examples of citizen participation in the United States. Many of them are quite common -- such as public hearings and legal notices of certain information. Others are not in widespread use, such as neighborhood-based, citizen involvement throughout the local budgetary process.

Citizens and public officials who wish to achieve greater amounts of citizen participation in public decision-making can build upon contemporary experience with various methods.

Beyond the need for wider application of existing practices, we should also be thinking about new approaches. This is especially true for the federal government, which in opinion polls has the lowest performance rating of all governmental units. Here are a couple of ideas.

Citizen Input into Federal Budget

The federal budget is one of the most important policy documents considered and adopted each year. Yet its development is one of the most secretive, least participatory processes found in government today.

The process starts in summertime about fifteen months prior to the fiscal year that begins October 1 of the following year. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues guidelines to federal departments and lays out a schedule for submission of requests. Departmental proposals go to OMB in the fall. Working under guidance from the president, OMB makes cuts (rarely increases). Cabinet members have the right to appeal to the president but use this right sparingly.

By December the budget is nearly complete. A few leading supporters of the president in Congress may be kept informed on some aspects of the emerging budget, but most members of Congress are in the dark on details. Final adjustments are made in January, including economic

projections and decisions on revenue measures. The president submits the budget to Congress toward the end of January.

Each house of Congress has a budget committee. They hold hearings in February and March, inviting witnesses from the administration, some outside economists, a small number of other experts, but hardly anyone from advocacy organizations. By mid-April or early May Congress adopts the budget resolution, which establishes spending levels for xx major categories and outlines the revenue package to pay for the budget.

By then two sets of committees are active in both houses. Authorization committees, each dealing with major sets of programs, such as armed forces, agriculture, education and labor, start holding hearings on what expenditures to authorize for the coming fiscal year. Meanwhile subcommittees of the two appropriations committees begin hearings on how much money to appropriate. These committees and subcommittees hear both government and civilian experts, generally with a broader range of witnesses than the budget committees, but they usually don't bring in many representatives of membership-based, citizen advocacy organizations. Nevertheless, advocacy organizations busily undertake direct lobbying and mount grassroots lobbying campaigns to influence decisions of authorization and appropriations committees. Only at this advanced stage is citizen input very strong.

This whole process could be significantly improved through much earlier citizen involvement in preparation of the president's budget and fuller opportunity for a wider range of views to be heard in congressional hearings.

Thus, in September and October when the departments are working on their budgets, the cabinet secretaries should hold public hearings so that a cross-section of interests can offer recommendations for the departmental budget. Regional directors should conduct similar hearings around the country. The president should also hold several public hearings that focus on overall budgetary issues, such as deficit reduction and taxation. Witnesses before the president could include representatives of governors, mayors, county commissioners, business, labor, social welfare, environmentalists, and other broad interests.

At these executive budget hearings the president, cabinet secretaries, and regional directors should ask all witnesses to respond to three questions:

- What expenditures do you want included in the budget?
- If you recommend increased spending, what expenditure reductions elsewhere in the budget will you publicly support?
- What revenue measures will you publicly support to get the federal deficit under control?

This approach would not only provide citizen input early in the federal budgetary process, but it would also encourage persons representing various interests to broaden their horizon and look at the total picture. It would seek to develop support for difficult measures needed to achieve deficit reduction.

A new president inaugurated on January 20 inherits the budget prepared by his (someday, her) predecessor. He (she) could immediately embark upon a shortened version of departmental and presidential public hearings with the intent of offering a revised budget by mid-April.

The congressional budget committees, when their turn comes, should hear from a broader range of witnesses. This can be accomplished not only through conventional hearings in Washington but also by satellite television linkage with witnesses situated in other locales around the nation. All witnesses should be asked the three key questions: what expenditures do you propose, what expenditure reductions and revenue increase do you favor to pay for it? Citizens should be asked not only to make recommendations on expenditure cuts and revenue measures, but also to pledge to support these measures, no matter how unpopular.

State governments could embark upon a similar process for early citizen involvement in budget making. Governors, department heads, and district directors could hold hearings well in advance of finalization of the governor's budget. State legislative committees could hear from a wider range of witnesses than they do now, could use television linkage to hear from witnesses scattered around the state, and could conduct field hearings.

Nationwide Study of Big Issues

We also need to find ways of achieving more widespread citizen participation in working out solutions to some of the big issues our nation faces. In a pluralistic society with many conflicting interests this is no easy task. Because we the people are divided, the president of the United States and major blocs within the U.S. Congress often espouse different solutions to major national problems. What appears as gridlock is a reflection that we the people haven't worked out a sufficient consensus to enable our representatives to come to an agreement. That being the case we need to participate more fully in the search for agreement.

Take, for example, the issue of health care financing. Total health care costs nationally are accelerating enormously. Because health insurance arrangements are highly diverse and in some respects duplicative, administrative expenses are high. Yet millions of people lack health insurance and do not have personal financial resources to pay for medical care.

A variety of remedies have been proposed, ranging from entirely private health insurance to totally governmental. They tend to cluster into three or four major sets of alternatives. Each has

powerful advocates who represent different interests: doctors, hospitals, private health insurance companies, consumer groups, and governmental agencies. So far none of these interests or coalition of interests has been able to prevail. Hence the deadlock.

As a way of bringing a larger segment of the public into the search for solution, there could be a process designed to achieve extensive, in-depth study and discussion by a wide segment of the population. Citizen opinion would then feed in the president and members of Congress. It might work as follows:

- Have a nonpartisan body, such as a unit of the National Academy of the Scientists, prepare a study guide that outlines the major alternatives for health care financing. The guide would relate the best case for each alternative as offered by their respective advocates. It would also provide an objective analysis of costs and benefits of each, of advantages and disadvantages, and of possible trade-offs. This study guide should be written in clear language that high school graduates can understand, making use of charts and graphs as appropriate.
- Publish the study guide in tabloid form and distribute it for sale in supermarkets, drug stores, and other easily accessible outlets. Existing private distribution networks could be used.
- Through a wide variety of citizen networks encourage the formation of local study groups, community forums, and interactive radio and television discussion. Groups which meet weekly or monthly, such as service clubs, neighborhood associations, other civic organizations, study groups in churches, synagogues, and mosques could schedule one or more sessions to talk about alternatives for health care financing. Local organizations with rival positions could come together to stage a debate. Both broadcast and cable television could organize forums with panelists representing the different sides and could give the viewing audience opportunity to call in questions and to vote. Local newspapers could print and receive ballots on the major alternatives and publish the results.
- After an appropriate period of local discussion, have members of the U.S. House of Representatives hold informal hearings and appear at community meetings in their districts to hear feedback from the various citizen study groups. Emphasis should be upon consensus building and exploration of possible compromises. U.S. senators could attend some of the district forums in order to listen to citizen opinion first hand.
- Develop ways for local conclusions to reach the White House and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources in a systematic manner. This would enable the executive branch to reconsider its own proposals in the search for an acceptable national approach to

health care financing.

Ultimately the Congress with presidential approval will have to adopt legislation to deal with health care financing. Widespread citizen education and public discussion could strengthen the determination to find solutions and help develop a consensus. Of course, the process could merely reinforce present division and add to the stalemate. But it's worth a try.

The same approach could be taken to other major national problems. This would require discipline in selection of topics so as not to overburden the participatory process. Maybe only one or two issues could be taken up each year for in depth consideration. A resolute commitment to fairness in preparing study material would be essential. Respect for the wisdom of the people by elected officials would be indispensable.

Conclusion

My own faith is that a well-informed, fully-involved citizenry has the capacity to make wise choices on controversial issues. Moreover, the democratic commitment is that what government does has to be based upon the consent of the governed. Experience teaches that this consent is best obtained through full citizen participation in important matters.

If interaction between citizens and the public officials they choose is to be effective, it must relate to real decisions on significant issues. Continuity of participation is essential, starting with early involvement in goal setting and problem defining. Citizens require a full supply of readily-accessible information. More often than not citizens need some kind of organizational base so that they can study problems and work out their own views on solutions.

Governmental agencies should be organized in ways that facilitate citizen involvement. Regularized processes are helpful. This facilitates a steady flow of citizen input and provides for feedback from public officials to the participating citizens.

Citizen participation processes do not replace other features of representative government, such as elections and the legislative process. Rather the numerous ways for achieving fuller citizen involvement and more intensive interaction between citizens and public officials enhance democracy by enriching and providing greater continuity to the consent of the governed.

14. Role of Protest

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Protest

The most vociferous method of advocacy is specified and protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Nonviolent protest, which exercises this right, has a long, honorable, though often controversial history in American democracy.

Protestors often are blunt and unrestrained in their language, as was William Lloyd Garrison in publishing the first issue of *Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper on New Year's Day 1831:

I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice....I am in earnest -- I will not equivocate -- I will not excuse -- I will not retreat a single inch -- AND I WILL BE

*HEARD.*¹

Ten years later Frederick Douglass, a runaway slave, joined the movement. Although he had been treated much better than most slaves, he had come to realize, as he wrote in his autobiography, "It was slavery, not its mere incidents that I hated. I had been cheated....The feeding and clothing me well could not atone for taking my liberty from me."² Participating in the abolitionist lecture circuit in the 1840s, Douglass found that "It did not entirely satisfy me to narrate wrongs -- I felt like denouncing them."³ And so Douglass, Garrison, and other abolitionists loudly and clearly denounced slavery until it was abolished.

For the First Woman's Rights Convention, meeting in Seneca Falls, New York in July 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton developed a Declaration of Sentiments that partly copied and partly paraphrased the Declaration of Independence. Naturally this new Declaration stated that "all men

¹ [find source]

² *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Written by Himself. London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1962 (reprinted from revised edition of 1892). p. 87.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

and women are created equal." Then it observed:

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her.⁴

To prove this assertion, the Declaration of Sentiments specified 15 kinds of abuses and usurpations.

To these woman's advocates, the right to vote was especially significant. Relentlessly the woman suffrage movement pursued this cause until victorious in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

⁴ *History of Woman Suffrage. Volume 1, 1848-1861.* Edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage. New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881 (republished by Arno & the New York Times, 1969). p. 70.

In the last third of the 19th century the populist movement arose in rural America in response to prolonged agricultural depression. As part of an energetic attack on eastern economic domination, Mary Ellen Lease of Kansas advised farmers to "raise less corn and more hell."⁵ In 1891 populists formed the People's Party and their candidate for president, James B. Weaver of Iowa, garnered more than one million votes in the 1892 election out of a total of __ million votes cast. In 1896 populists threw their support to William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska, who electrified the Democratic convention by proclaiming to the moneyed interests, "You shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold."

In this same period the labor movement became increasingly clamorous in its denunciation of the evils of capitalism. Among others Eugene Debs, after two decades of work in railroad unions, announced his conversion to socialism on January 1, 1897 with these words:

The issue is Socialism versus Capitalism. I am for Socialism because I am for humanity.

We have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Money constitutes no proper

basis for civilization. The time has come to regenerate society -- we are on the eve of

universal change.⁶

Closer to our own day the civil rights movement brought the same fervor to protest and public advocacy of equal rights for African Americans. The Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott in 1955 achieved national attention. A sit-in at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1956 publicized a technique that was soon applied elsewhere. Civil rights demonstrations occurred in numerous cities, and the March on Washington in August 1963 attracted more than 200,000 people. Everywhere participants sang, "We Shall Overcome", and they did.

During the last thirty years other groups have borrowed techniques from the black civil rights movement to push for human rights: Hispanics, Native American, other ethnic minorities, handicapped persons, gays and lesbians, and others.

Often protest movements have advocated specific remedies. Frequently after a few years less

⁵ Quoted by Vernon Louis Parrington in *Main Currents in American Thought*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930. vol. 3, p. 266.

⁶ Quoted in *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs* by Ray Ginger. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1948. p. 193.

militant legislators and chief executives have considered them, made modifications, and then put them into effect. This occurred, for example, with the agrarian populist movement of the late 19th century and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s.

But even if protestors offer no practicable remedy, they have a valuable function by identifying dissatisfaction within the population that should be addressed. They reveal pain within the body politic that requires treatment. This is as much a part of the consent of the governed as election campaigns, public hearings, and lobbying.

Protest can also have the function of withdrawing consent. To a considerable extent this occurred in the United States in the late 1960s and early '70s during the Vietnam War when millions of people expressed their opposition to the war and raised such a ruckus that political leaders knew that they had to end U.S. participation. Beyond American shores we saw this happen even more dramatically in Eastern Europe when the people went into the streets in 1989 and 1990 to indicate they were withdrawing their consent from the stagnant, repressive communist regimes. Without their consent the regimes collapsed and were replaced.

Chapter 18. Neighborhood Councils

Leftover from chapter 12.

A sizable number of cities have recognized the importance of neighborhood organizations and have created systems that give official recognition to neighborhood councils. In some instances neighborhood councils are established afresh by city ordinance or charter, and in other situations there is a process for recognizing existing neighborhood associations. In either case the neighborhood entity is governed by policy body elected by residents and responsible to them. It is an embodiment of grassroots democracy.

Whereas advisory committees tend to focus on single functions of government, neighborhood councils deal with a variety of issues affecting their area. They are generic in scope just as city government is generic for the whole municipality.

There can also be a citywide structure for bringing neighborhood representatives together. In this manner they can share ideas, give consideration to communitywide issues, resolve conflicts between neighborhoods, and work out solutions imbued with the spirit of the common good.

Cities with recognized neighborhood councils usually have some kind of neighborhood liaison office to work with them. In some locales the liaison office channels public funds to neighborhood councils so that they can hire their own staff or retain consultants. Elsewhere the liaison office provides staff assistance directly, sometimes through district offices.

Chapter 18. Enhancing Our Sense of Community

The civic life of democracy is strongest where it is held together by a strong sense of community. Unfortunately we the people of the United States of America lack this kind of cohesiveness today.

We are a nation groping for its future. It's as if we've lost our way. We don't know where we are heading because we're not certain where we want to go.

The Cold War is over, but lack a consensus for an affirmative vision of the world we want. We have a grave feeling of unease about our economy, but we are uncertain about what policies respond best to both domestic and global economic challenges.

We are having difficulty responding to urgent human needs at home. The plight of children is becoming increasingly severe. We recognize inadequacies of health care for millions of Americans, but we can't work out solutions because powerful interests are insisting on their own way. Social issues on which strongly-held, opposing viewpoints reign, such as abortion, divide us further.

Being divided on so many issues, we have lost our sense of community as a nation. Over-emphasis on "me-ism" has eroded our national character. People have turned inward. Many have become cynical about public life. Government, the jewel of democracy, is under attack. A steadfast commitment to the common good has severely weakened.

Now is the time to reverse this trend. Now is the time to renew the sense of community that is the foundation of a successful democracy. As we achieve a stronger sense of the community, we will be able to come to grips with the challenging problems that confront America.

COMMUNITY AS A "WE-FEELING"

What is this sense of community? In its essence it is a "we-feeling" instead of a "me-feeling."

Many of us experience this "we-feeling" in our family life through the reciprocal relationship of caring for one another. Parents make many sacrifices in order to provide for their children. As children mature, they take on greater responsibility within the family, and eventually they may look after aging parents. At some time or other each family member is likely to sacrifice some personal desire for the greater good of the family. In return the family is there when needed. You can always come home. That's the nature of a family community possessing a strong "we-feeling."

Our nuclear family (with one or two parents) may be part of a larger, extended family with

grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws forming an even wider community of mutual support. The extended family may gather for festive occasions, such as baptisms, bar mitzahs, weddings, holidays, and also for funerals. Sometimes they give one another economic support and help in childcare. Even where internal clashes occur, such as so-and-so not speaking to you-know-who, the extended family retains an overall cohesiveness. Neighbors move, friendships dissolve, but our relatives are still available, even if dispersed, as part of an enduring community.

Of course, some families are dysfunctional and don't achieve this "we-feeling", or realize only a partial sense of community. But where it exists, the family as a mini-community provides strength to the social fabric.

Many of us also develop a sense of community at our place of residence. For instance, a residential block, an apartment complex, a neighborhood. This spirit of community commences with neighboring. At a minimum neighboring starts with a friendly greeting, grows into social visiting, and can add a dimension of sharing and helping one another. The block or neighborhood may also have a structure, informal or formal, through which neighbors work together on mutual concerns: property upkeep, safety, obtaining proper public services and adequate public facilities. Collectively they can provide recreational activities for children and can look after infirm neighbors and the fragile elderly. As we work together with our neighbors for common purposes, we greatly strengthen the sense of community in our neighborhood.

We find this "we-feeling" in other places in our lives. This may occur at church, synagogue, mosque, or "new age" gathering. We may also experience it through identity with a particular racial and ethnic group, especially where it takes an organizational form, such as the [our group]-American Association. We may also achieve a "we-feeling" as we share the same enthusiasm with other people, such as working on a special cause, participating in arts and sports, or collecting things and pursuing hobbies together. Our common interests bind us with one another.

This sense of community is achieved more readily in more intimate circumstances than in a wider arena. More in neighborhoods than the metropolis as a whole. More in a city than in the entire nation. Nevertheless, we can and should seek to achieve a greater sense of our national community. This should be a major goal for us Americans throughout the 1990s.

OUR PAST EXPERIENCE AS A NATION

Perhaps we can gain instruction by looking back in our history to when the sense of community was stronger. In doing so, we should realize that community is more a feeling than a precise formula. It is both a collective sentiment and an individual emotion. This being the case, one's own feelings enter as a subjective element in historical review. And so it is with me.

In my lifetime, as one born in 1928, I can recall a particularly strong national sense of

community in the following periods and notable events:

- During World War II.
- The beginning of the space age from 1957 to 1969 when the first moon landing occurred.
- Passage of civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965.
- Shared grief over the deaths of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and President John F. Kennedy, and to some extent when Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. were killed.

To this list can be added the national response to the Great Depression, though my childhood recollection offers a limited personal perspective.

We can learn applicable lessons from all these events. We can also learn from periods when things were generally O.K. and the sense of community pretty much taken for grant. And we can gain understanding from events and periods that didn't create a national sense of community, and sometimes brought about disunity.

World War II

Of all these events of my lifetime, World War II produced the strongest sense of community. My recollections are as a teenager. Others who ranged in age from children to adults during World War II share this same feeling, as revealed in their recollections at the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1991.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the day that lives in infamy as President Franklin D. Roosevelt called it, catalyzed a nation that was already deeply disturbed by the spread of Nazi Germany in Europe, the expansion of Fascist Italy into Northern Africa, and the aggressive actions of Imperial Japan in Asia and the Pacific basin. The notorious Axis. Especially in Adolph Hitler we had an enemy whom everyone could despise and hate (except for a few saintly persons who could love even the most perverse evildoer). Even today my stomach tightens when I see the Nazi swastika.

Yet it was not just the common enemy that bound us together as a nation. It was a strong sense of common purpose that we were preserving freedom and democracy from tyranny and authoritarian domination. Our theme was the four freedoms that President Franklin D. Roosevelt articulated in January 1941 when he asked Congress for authorization to lend or lease war materials to nations already fighting against the Axis. He stated:

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression -- everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want -- which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peaceful life for its inhabitants -- everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear -- which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor -- everywhere in the world.¹

After Pearl Harbor hundreds of thousands of young men enlisted in the armed services, and millions more were willingly drafted. Although there were conscientious objectors because of religious conviction, there were scarcely any for political reasons. Women joined the armed services, went to work in war factories, served coffee and sandwiches when troop trains came through town, and ran USO reception centers. Civilians (mostly men, but some women) served as volunteers on local draft boards and rationing boards and acted as airraid wardens.

Families planted victory gardens to grow their own vegetables. Children and youth collected scrap metal (that was my contribution). Families proudly displayed silver stars in their windows, showing that a family member was in the service. In sorrow many changed theirs to a gold star, revealing death in action of a beloved. Neighbors shared their grief. Shared suffering strengthened national unity.

Beginning of the Cold War

¹ Citation to be added.

Even as the war was going on, American leadership commenced planning for a postwar world genuinely committed to the four freedoms. Wanting to avoid the retreat to isolationism that occurred following World War I, government and civic leaders began plans for what became the United Nations. At high school we followed the planning sessions at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington and the founding conference in San Francisco. Religious leaders used their influence. For example, the Methodist bishops (my denomination) embarked upon a "Crusade for a New World Order", based on law, economic and racial justice, and individual freedom.²

This enthusiasm for global responsibility carried into strong congressional support for the United Nations, an attempt to bring atomic weapons under international control (though a failure), the Marshall Plan to assist the reconstruction of Europe (even offered to East Europeans but rejected), and Point Four of President Harry Truman's 1949 inaugural address, calling for "a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas."³

But by 1949 the national sense of community was dissipating. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, wartime ally of convenience in the fight against Nazi Germany, took control of Eastern Europe, contrary to the Yalta agreement to have free elections. The United States responded with a containment policy, and Cold War was underway. Members of Congress made careers of stringent anti-Communism, such as Representative Richard Nixon, Representative Harold Velde as chair of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin. Anti-communism became the major theme of U.S. foreign policy.

The positive approach of Roosevelt's four freedoms faded into the background as the United States made alliances with authoritarian regimes because they were anti-communist, ignoring their suppression of freedom for their own people. For its 45 year duration the Cold War emphasized what we were against without articulating effectively what we favored. Lacking the idealism that underlay World War II, the Cold War was more a burden to bear than a cause to generate enthusiasm and create a strong national sense of community.

Other Wars

Nor have the hot wars since 1950 evoked the same sense of community that occurred during

² Herman Will, *A Will for Peace. Peace Action in the United Methodist Church: A History.* Washington: General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, 1984. p. 82.

³ *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1949.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964. p. 114

World War II. At first the Korean War elicited broad public support, but this weakened as fighting stalemated and U.S. casualties grew. In the 1952 presidential campaign, General Dwight D. Eisenhower gained points by promising to visit Korea and find a way to end the war. The resulting ceasefire and demilitarized zone was neither victory nor defeat, and thus nothing to celebrate and commemorate.

United States involvement in Vietnam began quietly under President Eisenhower, grew under President Kennedy, and greatly escalated under President Johnson but without full disclosure to the American people. After a while many Americans were dying in a war that lacked a clear purpose. Opposition grew, driving President Johnson from office and causing President Nixon to accept a peace settlement that in effect ceded South Vietnam to North Vietnam.

Repeatedly the junior officers of World War II who became president tried to project the diabolical Hitler image on other adversaries. such as Cuba's Fidel Castro, North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, Libya's Mumammar al-Qaddafi, and Iraq's Saddam Hussein. But they were small potatoes compared to the Nazi dictator.

In a quick rush of patriotism a heavy majority of Americans supported military action against Iraq in 1991 and rejoiced in a victory that made America "feel good about itself." This brief war, however, was not an event that developed a sustainable sense of community for the nation.

The Gulf War's underlying purpose was to preserve the nation's oil supply, and this lacks the inspiration that Roosevelt's four freedoms evoked. President Bush's attempt to make the war primarily a freedom issue went astray when Saddam Hussein remained in power. The main victims of the war were Iraqi military conscripts and civilians. In the war's aftermath rebellious Kurds and Shiite Muslims suffered greatly. U.S. destruction of water treatment plants, sewerage systems, and power production facilities created conditions that resulted in sickness and death for numerous children and elderly persons.

This kind of "new world order", achieved by the United States acting as global police, is scarcely one to generate lasting enthusiasm among the American people. Indeed, many ultimately felt frustrated about the inconclusive results. Some felt an enduring sense of grief for the extensive death and suffering of innocent victims.

Great Depression

On the domestic side of national life our strongest sense of community has occurred when we faced great challenges and pulled together in response. This occurred especially in the 1930s during the Great Depression when millions of Americans experienced unemployment and struggled to achieve an even modest livelihood.

My childhood memories from that period include a crew of men re-laying bricks on streets throughout town (WPA), the building of a new swimming pool in the park (PWA), construction of an earthen dam to create a recreation lake (CCC), and my mother giving food to hobos who came to the back door.⁴ This is a child's narrow perspective. Subsequently in talking to persons who were adults then and by reading history of the period, I have gained a strong impression that there was a great feeling of solidarity and mutual support. This was conveyed in movies and plays of the 1930s and in "social realism" murals in public buildings.

Solidarity gained expression in strong public support for President Roosevelt's New Deal. He told us, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself"⁵ and called for action to remedy "one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished."⁶ We sat around our radios listening to the fireside chats of our Dutch uncle. To be sure, various New Deal measures generated vigorous opposition, but that didn't alter the feeling that we're all in this together and need to support one another. Our grief over Roosevelt's death reflected our gratitude for his restoring hope during the Depression as much as thanks for his wartime leadership.

Subsequent Domestic Events

Maybe it's easier to generate a national sense of community in times of trouble than during peace and prosperity. The fifteen years following World War II were good to many Americans as they got their own homes, had steady employment, and more persons than ever received a college education. President Eisenhower's eight years in office were relatively calm after two hectic decades. We lived our personal lives, felt pretty good about ourselves, but most of us felt no calling to serve some noble national purpose.

No great cause pulled the nation together until the Soviet's launched sputnik, the first man-made satellite, in 1957. We Americans were shocked that another nation exceeded us in science and technology. In reaction we poured more resources into mathematics and science in our schools and increased our investment in the space program. President John F. Kennedy kept this going by initiating the program that sent astronauts to the moon. The first landing in 1969 was a unifying event. But most of us were involved only as spectators.

⁴ This was an era when programs were known by their initials: WPA = Workers' Progress Administration; PWA = Public Works Administration; CCC = Civilian Conservation Corps.

⁵ First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933.

⁶ Speech in Chicago on October 5, 1937.

Many in the younger generation, though, became excited by Kennedy's inaugural call: "ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country."⁷ Thousands volunteered for the Peace Corps and later for its domestic equivalent, VISTA. This challenge, though, was only partially fulfilled by the time of his assassination. In one sense our grief was for ourselves as candles of hope and promise were snuffed out.

In another sense this grief was healing, for it strengthened a national commitment to right the wrongs of racial injustice. Nonviolent civil rights demonstrations had awakened our conscience as a nation. After Kennedy's death a broad consensus emerged that legislative redress was essential. President Lyndon B. Johnson, congressional leadership, civil rights leaders, and the religious community worked together to gain passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Though stormy and controversial the civil rights movement in that period brought most of the nation together, but not everyone.

President Johnson's Great Society initiatives, though overblown with rhetoric, renewed attention to the unfinished New Deal agenda and achieved a long list of notable legislation. But this was overshadowed by the Vietnam War, which took away resources and generated massive opposition. The promise of the early sixties gave way to a nation in turmoil. The prospect of a unifying sense of national community disappeared.

Nor has it been since restored. Anti-war protest continued into the seventies. The Watergate affair forced President Richard Nixon from office. President Gerald Ford held things together but never excited the nation. President Jimmy Carter tried and made some progress, such as in gaining broad public support for energy conservation. But a public perception grew that his administration couldn't accomplish its goals, and Carter lost re-election.

President Ronald Reagan brought an identity with "everyman" and made millions of Americans feel better about themselves. Yet his eight years in office was also a period when greed thrived, racial hatred increased, and a meaner spirit developed throughout the land. George Bush's successful campaign for the presidency in 1988 tapped into racial fears, leaving the nation further divided. As president in spite of good intentions he failed to help us achieve a unifying commitment to any kind of overriding national purpose. In the 1992 election he returned to negative campaigning, attacking his opponent and once again failing to offer a positive vision for the future. [Complete after the election with discussion of Bill Clinton.]

That is where we are today: grappling to restore a national sense of community, an

⁷ *Public Papers of the President: John F. Kennedy, 1961.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962. p. 3

enthusiastic commitment to significant goals. The 1992 presidential election campaign opened possibilities but also contained lots of dissonance to a united community...[to be completed].

FACTORS IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

This sixty-year review reveals that three factors are especially strong in periods when we possess a robust sense of community as a nation. One is confrontation against a powerful adversary or a situation of grave adversity. The second is establishment of inspirational public goals that go well beyond our daily struggle for existence. The third is multiple opportunities to participate in worthy endeavors, even sacrificial service, in our home communities and in the wider arena of state and nation.

A New Adversary: Social Ills

Having a foreign enemy is one of the easiest ways to achieve a heightened feeling of national unity. Yet, at this time no nation on Earth threatens the security of the United States. There is no military danger even though we may be annoyed by actions of a few small-nation dictators. The challenges we face in the global economy need to be met by economic renewal within, not by Japan-bashing or similar treatment of other competitor nations. Anyway to build unity by fostering enmity against another country is unhealthy and unworthy of a truly great nation.

If we need an adversary to unite us, we might take up an idea formulated in *Looking Backward*, a utopian novel by Edward Bellamy, first published in 1888. The plot revolves around a man named Julian West, born in 1857, who fell into a deep trance in May 1887 and was not awakened for 113 years until September 2000. He had lots to catch up on. Among other things his main informant, Doctor Leete, told about new functions of government to promote human welfare (for this was the point of the novel).

Julian West found extensions of the functions of government rather overwhelming. He explained,

In my day it was considered that the proper functions of government, strictly speaking, were limited to keeping the peace and defending the people against the public enemy, that is, to the military and police powers.

To which Doctor Leete exclaimed,

And, in heaven's name, who are the public enemies? Are they France, England, Germany, or hunger, cold, and nakedness?⁸

So also we can ask ourselves as we approach the year 2000, are not our true enemies hunger and homelessness, economic insecurity, poor health, and environmental deterioration? Are not these the great challenges that can help to foster a renewed sense of community? If we need adversaries to excite us, let's make them the social ills that plague our Earth.

Worthy Goals

To give ourselves a higher sense of purpose, which is so essential for community building, let us establish goals that are worthy of pursuit and essential for our national well-being. As a start, here are some significant goals to seek:

- *End hunger and malnutrition.*
- *Provide a decent home in a suitable environment for every American family.*
- *Assure adequate medical care for everyone.*
- *Provide good education for all.*
- *Guarantee a job paying a living wage for everyone willing and able to work.*
- *Clean up the environment.*
- *Make better use of natural resources.*

This is the positive approach of Franklin Roosevelt's four freedoms, projected for everyone, everywhere in the world: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. For Roosevelt freedom from want was based upon achieving economic security for all, and freedom from fear meant a worldwide reduction of armaments. These remain valid goals.

Working Together in Problem Solving

Yet it's is not enough merely to lay out worthy goals. We have done that too often in the past

⁸ Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*. New York: New American Library, 1960. p. 55.

without make the necessary commitments to achieve them. Rather we must find ways to work together over the long term to achieve these goals.

The Preamble of the U.S. Constitution speaks of securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. Regretfully we of this generation have let slip away a proper concern for our own posterity: our children and grandchildren. We have saddled them with an enormous debt, allowed our industrial base to decline, piled up huge piles of toxic waste from commercial and military production, neglected our inner cities, and permitted highways and bridges to deteriorate.

Our failures cannot be overcome in a month, a year, or even the four years of a presidential term. Some problems require a concerted effort for at least a decade. Others may need as long as a quarter of a century to resolve. We must face this reality. At the same time we can use these challenges as a way to enhance our sense of community by dedicating ourselves to long-term solutions.

We can do this by develop plans for achieving our various goals over a period of years. Long-range plans can be divided into appropriate intervals, such as periods corresponding with the four year terms of president for national goals and terms of governors, mayors, and county executives for state and local goals.

Take for example the enormous amount of radioactive material produced by the nuclear weapons complex. Some experts believe that it will take 20 to 30 years to dispose of it properly and restore production sites for other use (and some may never be restorable). Thus, the president and Congress could agree upon a 24 year plan, divided into six four-year periods. The initial plan would specify in detail what should be accomplished during the first four years, and Congress would authorize the necessary funds. Subsequent four year periods would be sketched with lesser detail and then fleshed out as the period approaches. Such plan would be developed and carried out with full involvement of citizens living in communities affected by nuclear weapons production facilities and waste disposal sites.

Other kinds of plans could be much more decentralized. Take the needs of children and youth. Each metropolitan area and rural district could set up a Commission for Children and Youth composed of representatives of citizens, business leaders, voluntary agencies, and government including school systems. Through a broadly participatory process the commission could develop a 20 year plan for children and youth in the metropolitan area. This would be long enough to get babies born this year to adulthood. Individual neighborhoods, municipalities, and agencies could work out their own complementary plans.

A long-term plan for children and youth could be divided into four year periods dealing with age cohorts. For instance, the youth population ages 17 to 20 will contain a sizable number of

school dropouts who will need special kinds of employment training and remedial education along with job opportunities. Those 13 to 16 will include many who are failing at school and are at risk of dropping out; they will need intensive remedial education and the beginning of job-related training. Those 9 to 12 will have some who are behind in school but who can still catch up if given proper attention. Some children who are in kindergarten through third or fourth grade may already be showing signs of school failure which can be nipped in the bud. Younger children can be provided with quality pre-school education to prepare for school. A variety of supportive services will be needed for these different ages of children and youth and their families.

If these efforts are successful, the service mix of the following four years will be different. For example, there will be fewer dropouts but still enough to be concerned about. Children in early grades will be doing better because of their pre-school education, but some will need some special attention. And so on.

In a similar manner long-term plans can be drawn up for other major concerns, housing, health care, employment opportunity, environmental cleanup, and natural resource conservation. Planning would be highly participatory and would be linked with commitments by many parties for implementing action. Some ideas for participation on a national scale are offered in chapter 13.

This need not be a highly centralized planning process that follows the failed model of communist regimes. Rather emphasis would be upon decentralization to communities where people live and work. A metropolitan base would have some advantages for it would provide opportunities for people of different races and socio-economic classes to work together. But neighborhoods could also participate, producing neighborhood plans for housing, for children and youth, for public safety and other concerns.

With the plans would come commitments to do things. Neighborhood residents would indicate what they would do to help their own children and youth now and for the four years ahead. Businesses would state what they would do, both as economic enterprises and as civic entities. Public and private agencies would do likewise.

Although a few matters, such as clean up of nuclear weapons facilities, would require the national government to take principal responsibility, most concerns would be dispersed. Federal and state agencies could respond to local plans by indicating what resources they will make available to assist localities achieve what they themselves have devised. This will be significantly different than the present arrangement of top-down state and national government mandates.

In this manner we the people would be working together as individuals, voluntary associations, private agencies, businesses, and governments to resolve grave problems. As we do so, we would gain a greatly increased sense of community, achieved by confronting our common adversary: the

social and environmental problems of our society.

Unity Through Shared Events

To go with our dedicating ourselves to working together to carry out long-range plans, we might also think about shared events that increase our sense of community as a nation.

Once upon a time we had celebrations and commemorations that were observed across the land on the same day: Independence Day with parades, celebrative oratory, then fireworks; Memorial Day, started to commemorate the Civil War dead, evolving into Decoration Day to place flowers on graves of loved ones, both war veterans and others; Labor Day with parades featuring crafts and trades.

Today we have fireworks on the Fourth of July without much thought of the day's significance, though in 1991 there was some war-induced feeling of renewed patriotism. Memorial Day has become one of the three-day weekends for family leisure. Labor Day is another. Parades and oratory are a rarity on all three, except in small towns. The main national events that draw together millions of Americans are an occasional spectacular occurrence like the moon landing, the quadrennial inauguration of the president of the United States, the annual Superbowl, and the last episode of popular television shows (M.A.S.H., Dallas, and the Cosby show). In these our participation is passive and mostly homebound.

What we need are some active events to unite us -- events that seem natural to us, that build upon our existing strengths, that elevate our sense of common purpose, that achieves widespread participation.

As one possibility, let me suggest a springtime event. Traditionally this is a time for cleanup and beautification. We give our houses their spring housecleaning. We remove the winter grime and debris from the yard. We plant flowers and vegetables. We put in new trees, a task once widely observed on Arbor Day in the treeless Plains.

Around the country today many neighborhoods organize cleanup days. Residents rake their yards, prepare flower beds, and dig up vegetable gardens. They plant street trees. They carry out accumulated junk from cellars, garages, and apartment house storage bins. Often neighbors help one another. City and county government provides special trash pickup. And then the neighbors have a party late in the afternoon. Not only do residence improve the appearance of the neighborhood. but also they renew their sense of community.

Let's build upon this experience and have a national Neighborhood Renewal Day each year in springtime. The date could be worked out by national neighborhood associations, choosing a day

that doesn't conflict with special religious holidays such as Easter and Passover. It doesn't even have to be the same day every place around the nation because spring comes earlier in the South than in the North, so that the time of cleanup and planting varies. Even spread out over several weeks participants would have the feeling of involvement in an important national event.

For a people's event like this, there is no need for a presidential proclamation or congressional resolution, which are a dime a dozen. It should not be seen as a new federal program. Nor is there any need for a large, national promotional staff, even by a volunteer organization. Rather selection of a common date by national neighborhood organizations would be merely catalytic, leaving it up to neighborhoods, cities, and counties to make their own plans. Cleanup, beautification, and a celebrative party are likely to be common elements. Residents of apartment buildings where management takes care of all maintenance could use the day to get better acquainted with one another.

National television networks, broadcast and cable, could be encouraged to offer composite coverage of national Neighborhood Renewal Day. Sunday newspapers could include both local and national stories. This would let millions of neighborhood participants realize that their local activities are part of a grand, national event. In this manner the sense of community that neighborhoods possess would gain national extension.

And so let us take significant initiatives to achieve the widespread participation in our community life. Let us make a firm and enduring commitment to worthy public goals. Let us work together to overcome grave adversities, placing our emphasis upon positive achievements rather than merely trying to defeat an enemy.

As we unite in this manner, all of us getting involved in working for common objectives, we will attain the "we-feeling" that characterizes the sense of community.

19. Achieving Reconciliation

See CIVIC2.012 Reconciliation

CIVIC2.032 Diversity

Chapter 20. Achieving Reconciliation

In this book we have examined ways for citizens to be much more involved in American democracy: in the electoral process, in formulating governmental policy, in carrying out civic activities. There remains one major concern which we must deal with if American democracy is to achieve its highest aspirations. It is the divisiveness and anger that seems to be so pervasive.

Today forces of divisiveness and disunity are abroad in our land, belying our pledge of allegiance to one nation indivisible.. We are divided along racial, ethnic, religious, and gender lines. Suspicion and distrust are widespread. Intergroup conflict is commonplace. In many locales hate groups are active. Agitators add heat to the cauldron of discontent to gain a following.

Along with divisiveness there is a lot of anger throughout America. Although anger is basically a personal emotion, much of the anger these days has a social dimension that deserves attention.

Blacks are angry at whites because of centuries of mistreatment, beginning with slavery and continuing to the present day. Whites are angry at blacks, claiming that they are encroaching into their jobs and neighborhoods. Hispanics are angry at Anglos who want to keep them as second class citizens. Anglos are angry at Hispanics because they are pouring into cities and requiring services the taxpayers don't want to pay for. Native Americans are angry at the government over broken treaties and unkept promises. In some places residents are angry at Asian newcomers, who appear strangely different and seem to possess a community solidarity which they use for competitive advantage.

Women are angry at men, who have dominated them for far too long. Men are angry at women, who expect men to move into some kind of undefined, new relationship. Middle class taxpayers are angry at government at all levels because of rising taxes and a feeling that welfare recipients are getting a free ride and that rich people aren't paying their fair share. Needy people and their advocates are angry at the president and Congress because of a dozen years of program cutbacks even though there is plenty of money for the savings and loan bailout. Throughout the land voters are angry at officeholders. Persons staking out absolute positions on opposite sides of contentious social issues, such as abortion, are angry at one another.

Even though pervasive anger has this social dimension, it comes down to how we feel as individuals. It's likely that most of us would agree with Martin Luther's formulation: "we live in the world among people who sorely vex us and give us occasion for impatience, anger, revenge, and so on."¹

This calls to mind the literature professor who gave his class an exam that began by asking them to list the books they had read which they disliked the most. The students responded with great enthusiasm.

If we were asked a similar question about people we dislike, whom we are angry at, how would we respond? Who would be on our list? Not merely relatives or personal acquaintances who irritate us, but particular social groups defined by race, gender, religion, or ethnicity. Or, if these

¹ *Luther's Large Catechism*. Translated by F. Samuel Janzow. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978. p. 94

groups don't anger us, at least we are disturbed or annoyed by some of their characteristics.

If you feel inhibited about making a list for yourself, or deny that you are bothered by other groups, try an silent exercise in free association by completing these sentences:

Blacks are _____

Whites are _____

Southern whites are _____

Northern whites are _____

Men are _____

Women are _____

Jews are _____

Born-again Christians are _____

Catholics are _____

Latinos are _____

Arab-Americans are _____

Koreans are _____

Rich people are _____

Poor people are _____

For most of us some negative words are likely to flash through our minds for some of these groups, even though we check our tongue and don't utter them. These group stereotypes underlie today's social anger.

Our anger is compounded with fear. We are afraid for our personal security because of a high level of street crime and residential break-ins. Many are also afraid for their economic future because of job layoff, reduction of hours, or the prospect of job termination. Parents are deeply disturbed about their children's economic future. Young people fear that they will never be able to buy their own homes and achieve life-long economic security.

Thus, our fear has two features. We stand in dread of specific individuals or members of particular groups we think may harm us. We are also frightened by social and economic forces that seem out of our control but affect us adversely.

Fear immobilizes us as individuals. The politics of fear stands against the quest for justice and liberty. Anger corrodes our personal health and in the body politic poisons the search for mutual accommodation. Hatred twists our inner being, revealed in facial contortion. In public life hatred makes ugly the nature of political discourse.

We will never cope adequately with our social and economic difficulties until we overcome fear, anger, and hatred. We will never achieve the political consensus necessary for dealing with grave problems until we surmount widely prevailing divisiveness. Our society craves for reconciliation.

Where to start? The place to begin is gaining a clearer understanding of one another. We need a better grasp of what makes other people tick, especially our adversaries -- those who vex us, make us angry; those whom we fear. We need to know where they come from, to comprehend their life experiences. This won't eliminate all differences or cure every social ill and economic problem. But it can set the stage for dealing with diversity more amicably and for achieving a

stronger sense of community through the pursuit of common objectives.

As a means of self-instruction, let me suggest an exercise.

Envision someone from a social group you hate, fear, or at least distrust, a person who is your adversary, perhaps an individual who is about your age. Then think through an imaginary biography of that person. The purpose is twofold: to discover what makes that person what he (she) is and to identify commonalities with your own life. Write it out if you like, or do it only in your mind.

Where was the person born? Who were his (her) parents, their occupations and income level?

What kind of family, neighborhood, wider community?

Was childhood joyous or troubled? What kind of adversities did the person encounter? What opportunities were available? What kind of school did he (she) go to and what were his (her) achievements? What were his (her) teenage years like? Did he (she) go to college, to graduate school? What kind of first job, second, and third did he (she) have, and what was the wage or salary? Has he (she) married and had a family? What kind of parent is he (she)? What does he (she) do for recreation? Does he (she) attend a church, synagogue, mosque and engage in other religious practices? What is his (her) political orientation? Has he (she) ever been in trouble with the law? If so, why? What was the outcome? On the whole would you say his (her) life has been underprivileged, overprivileged, or somewhere in the middle? And other matters you can think of.

Relate the biography of your adversary to historic events. Depending upon age, was he (she)

involved in war: World War II, in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, or elsewhere? How has he (she) fared during economic cycles -- boom and recession? Has he (she) participated in the civil rights movement, or if not, how has he (she) reacted to it? What has been the effect of the movement for women's rights? Add other events important to your own life and imagine how he (she) was affected.

Now that you know more about your adversary's life history, try to determine what has made him (her) have characteristics you dislike. What social and economic forces have had a special impact? How would you have reacted to those forces differently than he (she) did?

With this knowledge of the person, now try to figure out how his (her) basic needs and hopes in life compare to yours. In your mind or on a sheet of paper make two columns, one for you and one for him (her). List your needs and hopes in one column and his (hers) in the other.

My guess is that both lists will contain mostly the same items. Such as: Enough to eat. Adequate shelter and clothing. Personal safety. Sanitary water, clean air. Perhaps wealth, social status, and symbols of such status. Good friends. Successful courtship (if at that stage in life). A loving spouse (in the future, or for your present spouse to be more loving). Children and a happy family life. A good future for your children and grandchildren. End of racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual stigmatization. Good health, lack of pain. Death to come after a long, happy life, to be painless and not a burden to your family. An afterlife (if you so believe).

And there's more: Your favorite team to win the championship. Success in school. Success in business, profession, trade, or occupation. Better TV programs. Replacement of officeholders in

government, church, club, and other organizations -- or their re-election. To win an election yourself, or gain an appointment to office. A nice vacation with good weather. The person in the next apartment to be less noisy, and maybe less nose. The neighbors next door to keep their dog under control. And lots of other mundane things that provide happiness.

Now perform one other short exercise. Make lists of your fears and what your adversary fears. Some of the common fears are likely to be the converse of hopes: Fear of personal injury, verbal abuse, theft of property, bad health, death. Fear of unruly neighbors and disorderly youth. Loss of job, income, and home.

Other fears are matters of psychological discomfort: Fear of change and uncertainty. Fear of differences we don't like or understand. Fear of alien ideas. Fear of losing top status, or fear of being considered second rate. Fear of being treated unjustly. Fear that your needs are being ignored.

If you begin to notice many similarities between you and your adversary in hopes and fears, in aspirations to meet basic needs, it is no wonder. You are both human beings. All of us -- friend and foe -- breathe, eat, and sleep in order to stay alive. When we are cut, we bleed. That blood is one of four types (A, B, AB, or O) and either Rh positive or negative, not distinguishable by race, nationality, ethnicity, or religion. Everyone of us will die. We all have one God, who is the same for all of us, regardless of our belief or disbelief.

Our basic human nature is the same, down deep. My observation and personal experience

leads me to believe that human nature displays a pair of intertwined characteristics: self-seeking and self-giving. The one has an inward pull of what's in it for me, the other an outward thrust of how I relate to others and care for them. The two impulses are interwoven. Neither is totally missing from anyone.

Everyone of every race and nationality possesses the intertwined traits of self-seeking and self-giving. The relative emphasis varies among individuals and over periods of time, but neither trait is missing from anyone. Even the most saintly, altruistic person has an element of self-seeking. Even the most diabolical person has a remnant of self-giving and a potential for much more.

Yes, all of us humans have fundamental similarities in physiology and psychology. At the same time each of us is an individual who varies in some distinct way from every other human being.

We also have special ties binding us to a particular segment, such as family, clan, ethnic group, nationality. This segmentation is the basis for many of the adversarial relations with others whom we confront. It is a source of some of our fears and may be the rationalization for hatred. Indeed, these "others" are different from us in certain respects, but they also have many similarities, as we have seen. We should acknowledge and understand both our differences and our similarities.

The problem is that we tend to highlight the flaws of groups we dislike, and we emphasize the virtues of our own group. For example, we might ascribe one or more of the following characteristics to a social group we distrust, even hate: cliquish, deceitful, shifty, greedy, lazy, free-loading, sexually promiscuous, drunken, drug-addicted, unruly, violent.

Yet, these are individual, not collective, characteristics. Consider, if you will, your own

extended family, your friends and neighbors, your acquaintances within your own social group.

Don't some of them have one or more of these flaws?

And is not the reverse true? Are not such virtues as honesty, hard work, generosity, fidelity, temperance, patience, and kindness found among people within your adversary group? Thus, we can go back to the free association exercise and say:

Some blacks are _____, but others are _____.

Some whites are _____, but others are _____.

Some men are _____, but others are _____.

Some women are _____, but others are _____.

And so on.

So we need to beyond group stereotypes. This won't remove all sources of disagreement and every cause of conflict, but it helps set the stage for reconciliation.

We can take another preparatory step toward reconciliation by increasing our self-understanding. To do this we can return to the literature professor, mentioned previously, who asked his students to list the books they disliked the most. The second question in his exam was: to what shortcoming in your self do you attribute this dislike?

Are we willing to ask ourselves a similar question on our dislike of other social groups? To what personal shortcomings do we attribute our own distrust, our anger, our hatred and fear?

As a means of working out an answer, in your mind's eye picture yourself as a new born baby.

A nurse picks you out of your crib in the hospital nursery. You open your eyes and notice that the other babies have various skin color: white, black, brown, bronze, and some have eyes shaped different than the others. But you all have the same needs: your mother's milk and a change of diapers. As far as you know, its natural for this diversity to be together.

Fast forward to your first birthday. Family members are the sole guests at your birthday party. Their skin color and facial characteristics are similar to your own. In the afternoon your parents take you to the zoo. You see different kinds of animals and different kinds of children. You may have an inkling that there are boy-children and girl-children. You are aware that the world beyond your family has lots of differences. Fine! That's the way it is!

Fast forward again to your fourth birthday and an outing in the park. Again you see many different kinds of people. By now you've had instruction by word and example on gender roles -- what boys and men do, what girls and women do. You may have received direct and indirect coaching from your parents and grandparents to be wary of certain types of people: blacks, whites, Puerto Ricans, Chinese. They're different. They do this and that. They can't be trusted. They're out to get us. We are victims. You may have heard your father or mother complain about a work situation with racial or ethnic overtones. Or it may be more subtle, such as the tone of voice and body language your parents use when "one of them" comes to the door or meets your family in a shop or on the street.

If you're from a minority group, you may have already experienced displays of bigotry. If you're from the majority, you may have observed some action that seems to confirm your parents'

warning. If a family member has frequently expressed hatred toward a particular group, you may be copying his or her feelings. If your parents have tried hard to teach you acceptance of everybody, you have picked up clues elsewhere. And even the most fair-minded, conscientious parent may slip and expose a prejudice latent from her or his own upbringing.

Let's be honest to admit that everyone of us has had lessons in bigotry and hatred by the time we've entered elementary school. By then we've already been taught to fear and hate.

This situation is well expressed in the 1949 Broadway musical, *South Pacific*. The setting is a South Pacific island during World War II. Marine Lieutenant Joseph Cable, a Princeton graduate, takes up with Liat, a young Tokinese woman. He won't marry her and take her to America, though, because he knows she would never be accepted in his home community, the Main Line suburb of Philadelphia.

In another romance Nurse Ensign Nellie Forbush falls in love with a local French planter, Emile de Beque. But then she discovers that Emile has two children from his first marriage to a Polynesian woman, who died five years earlier. Being from Little Rock, Arkansas, Nellie is so unsettled by Emile's previous "mixed marriage" and his interracial children that she breaks off with him. She explains to Emile, "There is no reason....This is something born in me....I can't help it."

Lieutenant Cable disagrees and tells Emile, "These things aren't born in you. That's a fact."

Then he sings:

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,

*It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught to be afraid
of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught!*

You've got to be carefully taught!²

The redeeming side of this conclusion is that hate is not innate. We learn it. Whom we have learned to hate, we can learn not to hate. We can change our attitudes toward other people. We can modify our conduct as we relate to them.

Although there may be an instinctual element of fear in general, the specific objects of fear are culturally determined. What we have learned to fear, we can approach in a different manner. We may protect ourselves without an antagonistic spirit. We can change social and economic conditions that cause our fears. We can cope with adversity without creating personal enemies or encompassing an entire social group in animosity.

Above all we can be careful not to pass on to our children our own fears and hatreds.

² *From South Pacific. Libretto by Oscar Hammerstein 2nd. Mimeographed manuscript in Library of Congress, 1949.*

We can also probe deeper into our own lives and conclude that we may be putting down other groups because of our own personal insecurity. To achieve our own sense of self-esteem, we try to feel superior to other persons.

If we are poor and white, we want to keep blacks "in their place." If we are middle income homeowners, who have scrimped and saved to buy a home in "a good neighborhood", we don't want persons considered undesirable to live nearby. This may be whites wanting to keep out blacks, and it can be middle class blacks wanting to keep out poor blacks. It's prestige as well as a concern for housing value. If we are upper income persons, we may have the same psychological need even though we are more able to insulate ourselves from direct contact with persons we consider undesirable.

Our psychological insecurity is worsened when we face economic insecurity. Thus, in today's fragile U.S. economy manufacturing jobs are disappearing and promotion opportunities are diminishing. Persons competing for a declining number of jobs would like to narrow the competition by excluding whole groups of competitors by race or ethnicity. Or they may feel that minority groups now have an unfair advantage because of "affirmative action" remedies to past discriminatory practices. So our economic fears draw us into racial animosity.

As individuals we can grow out of personal insecurity that leads to bigotry by finding ways to achieve self-esteem through positive accomplishments and positive attitudes towards ourself. Thus, a self-assured man is not threatened by a woman insisting on full equality. Self-confident white persons need not be threatened by black persons with normal aspirations for better jobs, better

housing, and equal treatment.

As a society we can provide solid economic opportunities for everyone. In that manner there won't be people living in a precarious economic situation who displace their anxieties by seeking suppression of other social groups.

Gaining a better understanding of both ourselves and our adversaries is an essential beginning of the process of changing our attitudes and relationships. This sets the stage for the next step: seeking and offering forgiveness. Doing this makes reconciliation possible.

For guidance we can return to Martin Luther. His observation about people who sorely vex us, quoted earlier, comes from his exposition of the petition addressed to God in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Luther pointed out that this petition "is concerned with our poor, miserable conduct." Because people irritate us and we become impatient and angry, "we stumble every day and overstep our bounds." But it is not they who are angry and vengeful. It is we ourselves. Therefore, we need to ask God's forgiveness. As Luther explained:

in case anyone insists on his own goodness and despises others,...let him look into himself when this petition confronts him. He will find that he is no better than others and that in the presence of God everyone one must duck his head and come into the joy of forgiveness only through the low door of humility.³

³ Luther, *op. cit.*, p. 93

Having God's forgiveness for our own shortcomings, we are then in a position to forgive those who trespass against us. Thus, Luther instructed us:

So we also must constantly forgive our neighbor who does us harm, violence, and injustice, treats us with abominably shabby tricks, and the like."⁴

Following the teaching of Jesus, who gave us the Lord's Prayer in the first place, we can also forgive our enemy who does such things to us.

Martin Luther King, Jr., a 20th century namesake of the 16th century reformer, picked up this theme in a sermon on "Loving Your Enemies", written in a Georgia jail. King indicated: "He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love." He further stated:

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 93

Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship.

Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere for a fresh start and a new beginning...Forgiveness means reconciliation, a coming together again.⁵

And so if we the American people are to come together again, to become one nation indivisible, each of us must ask God's forgiveness for our own anger and hatred. This is true regardless of who sparked our anger or what ignited our smoldering hatred. Having asked for our own forgiveness, we are then in a position to forgive those who harm us or seem to threaten us. We can resist injustice perpetrated against us, but we ought not hate the perpetrators. As the apostle Paul taught: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."⁶

Through better understanding of other groups, through acceptance of diversity, and through forgiveness we can bring about the reconciliation that is necessary for achieving the kind of friendly and supportive society we all seek. In doing so we can follow the wise counsel that Abraham Lincoln offered in his second inaugural address, following the bloody and divisive Civil War:

*With malice toward none,
with charity for all,
With firmness in the right
as God gives us to see the right,*

⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963. p. 35

⁶ Romans 12:21.

Let us strive on
to finish the work we are in,
to bind the nation's wounds,...
To do all which may achieve and cherish
a just and lasting peace
among ourselves and with all nations.⁷

This is what Abraham Lincoln said 16 months after he made a memorial address at one of the great battlefields of that war. At Gettysburg he reminded us that we live in a nation "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men [and women] are created equal." It is for us the living, he insisted, to dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work of achieving democracy's highest aspirations.

All of us, then, can follow Lincoln's lead and resolve

that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.⁸

American democracy isn't easy, but it's worth it!

⁷ *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969. p. 128. Omitted is topical reference "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

⁸ Abraham Lincoln's address at the site of the Battle of Gettysburg on November 19, 1963. Transcript of oral version. *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1963). vol 7, p. 162.

DEMOCRACY ISN'T EASY -- BUT IT'S WORTH IT!
A Grassroots Perspective

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A Grassroots Perspective

by Howard W. Hallman

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SYNOPSIS

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**Prologue. Consent of the Governed: Representative
Government in a Participatory Mode**

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Part One. Making the Most of Elections

**1. You Can't Vote in Other People's Districts
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How to Become a Candidate for Election**

Election cycle (a continuously revolving stage)...Getting on stage...Which office?...Positioning...Deciding when to run...Selection committees... Public benefits

3. Keeping Incumbents Alert

What incumbents do to position themselves for reelection: constituent services, mailings, questionnaires, town meetings, speaking engagements, attend events in district, informal visits...These things are part of their responsibility to serve and represent their district, but it also positions them for reelection...Citizens can tie into this natural process and can keep incumbents alert to their needs and desires.

4. Infusing Political Parties

How political parties are organized and function in three arenas: local, state, and national...Interaction between political party units of the three arenas...Greatest opportunity for citizens in local arena...Different styles of local political parties around the nation (ranging from "machine" controlled to highly participatory)...How citizens can get involved in different styles, and perhaps change them.

5. Campaigns to Accentuate the Positive...

Basic elements of a political campaign (rudimentary "how to", referring to other sources for more complete guidance)...Campaigns to elevate, not tear down...Major issues to deal with and how to approach them constructively, sometimes courageously...Code of Fair Campaign Practices

6. ...And Eliminate the Negative

What individuals can do to eliminate negative campaigning...How candidates can respond to negative campaigning without become negative (especially through humor)

7. Who Pays the Piper?

Trends in campaign financing...PAC influence...Problems...Remedies

8. Voting: Democracy's Life Depends On It

Why vote?...Trends...Who participates less?...Reasons for nonparticipation...How to increase voting

Part Two. Influencing Public Policy

9. Decision Making: Who and How

Concept of governing coalition: sets of people (executive, legislative, interest groups) who work out decisions in various public policy areas (such as finance, housing, education, transportation, foreign policy)... Bargaining within governing coalitions, decisions through consensus as much as unilateral action or formal vote...How citizens can influence governing coalitions: getting inside, pressure from outside (next chapters)

10. Grassroots Organizing for Advocacy

Why organize...Techniques...Ties with state and national organizations... Representation in state capitals and Washington, D.C....Citizen coalitions

11. Lobbying

Individuals...grassroots organizations...At capital (direct)...Connection between direct and grassroots lobbying...Essence of timing

12. Citizen Participation Processes

Variety...Illustrations: community planning, budget making, natural resource planning...How to take advantage of existing processes, how to initiate where absent

13. Issue Balloting

Referendum...Initiatives...Constitutional and charter amendments... Electronic balloting

14. Role of Protest

Notable examples: abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, populism, civil rights...Value for democracy...Techniques (including withdrawal of consent) ...Limitations (calls attention to needs but doesn't get inside decision-making process)

15. What We Expect of Leaders

Representing voters versus taking policy initiatives beyond majority opinion...District interests versus broader common interests...Continuous interaction with citizens

Part Three. Strengthening the Civic Foundation

16. Citizen Associations

Historic tradition...Variety today...What they do (mutual benefits, community service, advocacy)...School for democracy (experience in democratic process, leadership development)...From civic action into politics

17. Neighborhood Councils

Origins...Contemporary experience: variety, how organized, by whom, what they do, effectiveness...Spreading their use

18. Enhancing Our Sense of Community

Loss of sense of community as a nation...When stronger...Three factors for achieving: serious challenge (powerful adversary or grave adversity to overcome), inspirational public goals, multiple opportunities to participate in public endeavors...Uniting today for our children and grandchildren

19. Reconciliation

Today's divisiveness...Praise for diversity...Achieving understand...Overcoming hatred through forgiveness

Epilogue. Politics: The Art of the Potential

Reprise of methods for continuous, interactive consent...Political processes...Democratic involvement...Politics as art of, not merely the possible, but also the potential

September 24, 1992

Part Three. Policies for the Future

.31 *Gaining a Long Term Perspective*
Our posterity

.32 *Action for Children, Not Just Talk*

.33 *Jobs for All, Not Handouts*

.34 *Seniors for Fairness*
Rich people for fairness

Part Four. Making Peace with Ourselves and the World

.41 *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

.42 *You've Gotta Be Taught to Hate*
Racism

.43 *Vietnam Amnesty*

.44 *Farewell to Nuclear Arms*

.45 *Internationalism without Militarism*

September 10, 1992

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Prologue

Consent of the Governed Representative Government in a Participatory Mode

We are instructed by the American Declaration of Independence that the just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed. Yet in the past couple of years millions of Americans have stood up and exclaimed,

"Wait a minute! I didn't consent to what's been going on. I never voted for the enormous federal deficit. I didn't want the government to ignore unemployment and other problems of a lagging economic. I never agreed to the mess the health care system is in. I don't approve of government officials looking out for themselves and the special interests that finance their reelection campaigns. I never consented to any of this!"

For this reason "throw the rascals out" became a dominant theme in of the 1992 election. "We want change" was another expression.

Naturally all the candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination campaigned for change, including the Bill Clinton, who became the party nominee. Then unexpectedly George Bush picked up this theme -- he who was in his twelfth consecutive year in power, first as vice-president and then as president. Yet, a huge block of the electorate wanted "none-of-the-above". So Ross Perot, business entrepreneur and amateur politician, emerged as a candidate unaffiliated with the dominant political parties. Then he couldn't stand the heat of electoral politics and backed off.

With an anti-incumbency mood sweeping the country, an unprecedented ___ members of the U.S. House of representatives retired or were defeated for reelection. Even so __ percent of the House membership was reelected. And __ out of __ U.S. senators running for reelection were successful. Either voters concluded that they were well represented (often the case), or they felt that "even if he is a rascal, he's our rascal!" (Or she.)

The events of 1992, rather than being an attack on our political system, have revealed its strength. We are able to bring about changes in office holders by the ballot rather than through revolution. The American voter spoke and was heard.

At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect it will have on the conduct of public business in the United States. Moreover, a large number of voters want even greater change than occurred in the 1992 election. They remain skeptical about the effectiveness of the consent process in American democracy today.

That being the case it is worthwhile to take a fresh look at the true meaning and the practical application of the consent of the governed in American democracy. And especially how citizens at the grassroots can control and influence policy-makers functioning at state capitals and in Washington, at city hall and the county courthouse.

FOUNDERS' PERSPECTIVE

For the founders of the United States of America, "consent of the governed" was a phrase in common usage. It had been used for several hundred years by European writers who tried to explain why men and women, who seemed to be born free, would allow a government to reign over them. Among others John Locke, whose writings were very influential on the founders, talked a lot about consent, although he never defined it operationally.

*So it was natural that Thomas Jefferson penned "consent of the governed" into the Declaration of Independence. And it was natural for James Madison in the 39th *Federalist* essay to define a "republic" (his name for what we call today "representative democracy") as "a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people."*

In practical terms the framers of the U.S. Constitution leaned more toward indirect than direct derivation of consent. Among the officers of the new national government only members of the House of Representatives were elected directly by the voters. State legislatures chose U.S. senators and the electors who gathered every four years to select the president. In nine of the thirteen states the legislature also appointed the governor. Moreover, the right to vote was generally limited to white male property owners.

The founders want this narrow electorate to choose the principal officers of government and let them take it from there. This was representative government in an elitist mode. It was a modest beginning for the consent process, but it was headed in the right direction.

NOW CONTINUOUS, INTERACTIVE CONSENT

We've come a long ways in the last 200 years. State laws and U.S. constitutional amendments have removed all voting restrictions based upon property, race, gender, and age. The right to vote is now universal.

All governors and U.S. senators are directly elected. Presidential electors are bidden to reflect the popular vote in their states. Political parties nominate candidates and work for their election. Months-long campaigns feature intense interchange between candidates and voters.

Moreover, we citizens are not content to sit back and wait for the next election to give our consent once again. Individuals lobby elected and appointed officials to influence their decisions.

Advocacy organizations provide collective strength to lobbying efforts. Sometimes people assemble to express their grievances, thus sending a message to public officials.

Formal patterns of interaction between citizens and public officials are built into governmental operations. Public hearings and advisory committees are widespread. Citizen involvement in community planning is commonplace.

Indeed, in the United States the manner of consent-giving has become so elaborate that it has become virtually a continuous process rather than merely a once-and-that's-it occurrence. Consent-giving events, such as periodic elections of public officials and votes-by-ballot on constitutional amendments and referendums, are preceded by months of campaigning. Soon after election many incumbents begin to think ahead toward the next election, and this affects their relations with constituents. Lobbying and other forms of citizen advocacy go on throughout the year, and so do formalized processes of citizen-public official interaction.

Consent of the governed in the United States has become a continuous, interactive process. Day in and day out citizens are in touch with public officials. Local, state, and national government have institutional arrangements to facilitate this relationship. We now have representative government in a participatory mode. It's incomplete because participation isn't as broad as it ought to be. But at least multiple opportunities are available, awaiting for more citizens to become engaged.

HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

So if you feel that you haven't given your consent to what's been going on, you have had many opportunities to do so. At the same time let's acknowledge that the consent process is not perfect. If millions feel alienated from government and are distrustful of officeholders, improvements are needed in the way government is run and in the way consent of the governed is attained. Efforts are needed to draw more persons into the consent process on a regular basis.

This book focuses on how to achieve much wider and truly meaningful citizen involvement in public affairs, especially at the grassroots. But before we get into details of needed improvements, let's review briefly the principal actions citizens can undertake as they participate in continuous, interactive consent-giving. We'll start with the electoral process and then look at ongoing governmental operations and civic activities.

Vote

Every U.S. citizen age 18 and older may vote, except for a few felons who have lost this right. Historically it is a hard-won privilege.

It is time to reassert the concept that voting is a responsibility of all citizens. Not a duty imposed by law or moral preaching but a responsibility internal to one's basic belief and civic commitment.

We vote not merely for our personal self-interest, though that may be factor in our choice of candidates. Rather we should seek to promote the common good when we cast our ballot. We don't worry that our single vote doesn't yield much influence or that our favorite candidate doesn't have much of a chance. We don't refrain from voting because we don't like any of the candidates. After all, we have other remedies, ranging from write-in votes to greater involvement in politics in order to get better candidates. We vote because that is what we do as citizens in a democracy.

Work in Political Campaigns

Another significant expression of citizenship is to become involved in political campaigns. This can occur through a political party or the campaign organization of a particular candidate.

As a political party member you can work as a volunteer at party headquarters before and during campaigns. If you want deeper involvement, you can become a party officer, such as block captain, precinct leader, member of the central committee (city, county, state, or national). Party reform often starts in contests for these offices. You can become a delegate to the city, state, or national party convention. You take part in the party primary election by supporting particular candidates and then work to elect the party nominee in the general election.

If you are dissatisfied with the Democratic and Republican parties and despair of reforming them, you can affiliate with a third party. That's an honorable calling, for historically third parties have been a creative force in American politics. They bring attention to serious problems and unmet needs, and they offer remedies, which sometimes the main parties later take over.

Or you may prefer to get involved in the campaign of independent candidates, as many people did for a while in 1992 in support of Ross Perot. On occasion this can be an important endeavor, though it lacks the continuity of participation over many years that political parties provide.

Whatever your entrée, different political campaigns have similar tasks to perform: get out mailings, make phone calls, hand out literature, distribute bumper stickers, put up yard signs, have house parties for candidates or for watching the candidate on television, help organize rallies, assist in fundraising, promote voter registration and then turnout on election day.

Run for Office

Seeking public office is one of the highest calling in a democracy. It is not for everyone, but there seems to be no shortage of candidates for the xxx,xxx popularly elected offices in the United States.

Some make a career of politics. They move from one elective position to another or settle in one and stay a long time. Others gain appointive positions before or after holding elective office, or alternate between elective and appointive. Some enter elective office for one term or two, coming from a civic leadership role or from the world of business, and then returning there. There is a place for all. And for mutual respect.

If we think back to our founding period, we have to be impressed by the quality of the persons who served in elective office: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, to name the first five presidents, and many others who were governors and held legislative positions.

In our own day we have had better elected officials that we are sometimes willing to admit. If we go back 65 years, we note that some of our presidents have been professional politicians: Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jerry Ford, George Bush. Others have had other careers: Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan. All had strengths and weaknesses. Some accomplished more than others. All were personally ambitious, but they realized that elective office is a high calling that goes far beyond ego fulfillment and enters the realm of working for a better society.

Mayors, county commissioners, township officials, governors, state legislators, members of city council and the U.S. Congress, elected school board members, and other holders of elective office understand this feeling. Women and men. Persons of all races, religions, and ethnic groups. Young, old, and middle-aged.

To be sure, a few of our elected officials are corrupted by pursuit of economic gain. Some are windbags, inflated with huge egos. Most, like the general run of the population, act from a mixture of motives, combining self-interest and concern for others. But by and large they are no worse or no better than the rest of us. Why should they be? They are who we are. We elect them, and frequently reelect them.

Participate in Governmental Decision-making

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to get their opinions, hear their complaints (and sometimes praise), and secure their participation in formulating public policy. Legislators hold public hearings, send out questionnaires, appear at community meetings, receive constituents at their office, meet people informally in their district. Elected chief executives and their appointed department heads form advisory committees, seek comments on draft reports and proposed regulations, attend community meetings, and send out staff to meet with citizen groups.

Where there are official processes for citizen participation, citizens can get involved and work cooperatively with public officials. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation, citizens can promote improvements.

But many citizens don't wait to be asked. They initiate their own contact with public officials, as individuals and through advocacy organizations, in order to influence public policy. That's a vital part of democracy and the consent process.

Effective advocacy organizations understand that the final vote on a bill or the formal decision by an executive official is often the product of a months-long process. They keep in contact with decision makers throughout all stages of the process. They start early and stay involved persistently. They probe for points of influence and use various means of persuasion.

Advocacy organizations develop proposals, present their ideas to legislators and governmental executives, press for acceptance through direct and grassroots lobbying, oppose proposed policies and regulations considered inimical to their interests, seek media attention for their ideas, sometimes make campaign contributions and provide volunteers to candidates, and in many other ways interact with public officials. If they aren't heard, they stage marches and rallies to attract attention to their cause.

The combination of citizen advocacy and public official outreach deeply enriches the consent process and makes it a continuous endeavor.

Participate in Civic Activities

Another aspect of citizenship, going beyond the consent process, is the multitude of civic activities that millions of Americans engage in.

There is a saying, "Want to live in a better neighborhood? Join your neighborhood association." This applies to every city and suburban dweller, rich, middle income, and poor. Residents of rural areas have equivalent organizations working for community betterment. By extension it is applicable in states, regions, and the nation as a whole.

The slogan can have many permutations:

- Want to have safe streets? Join a neighborhood watch.
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The list could go on and on.

Americans have a proclivity for forming citizen associations to get things done. Some associations are oriented toward service and community improvement projects. Others concentrate mostly upon mutual benefits for their members, although from time to time they undertake community service activities.

Many associations realize that their concerns are affected by public policies and that some of the solutions they seek can be achieved through governmental action. Therefore, they become involved in public policy advocacy. Some devote their energies almost exclusively to this task.

Think of a significant public issue, and you'll find associations heavily engaged in public policy debate: civil rights, education, homelessness, unemployment, energy conservation, tax rates, highway safety, defense, foreign policy. Ask legislators and they'll tell you that they get more mail and receive more phone calls from associations and their members than from political party officials.

And so it is that citizen associations are a vital part of American democracy. Those of you who want to increase your participation in community endeavors and in political life may find that joining an association is the right calling for you. Just search out an association that meets your interests and could use your abilities. Or organize a new one. Depending upon your preference, you can concentrate upon community service or public policy advocacy. Or a combination. There's plenty to do. Your participation is needed and should be welcomed.

REAFFIRMATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Let us reaffirm that every citizen in a democracy has a responsibility to answer the call to some form of participation in civic and political life.

To those of who entered the political arena for the first time in 1992, I say, "Welcome. Please stay involved." To those who stuck with your party, I say, "Good for you. We need dedicated party loyalists in American democracy."

To those who remain on the sidelines of the political arena, preferring to confine your civic life to nonpolitical activities, I say, "That's fine. We need dedicated civic workers. But won't you also consider getting more involved in politics?" To those who are so apathetic, alienated, or too busy to get involved in either politics or civic action, I plead, "Won't you lend a hand? We need your help to make this country achieve its full potential."

Full participation by the citizenry is the lifeblood of American democracy. All of us are called to be civic and political activists so that together we can keep our nation strong and vital.

Let us celebrate together the many ways we make our governments work effectively by practicing continuous, interactive consent of the governed. Let us explore together possible improvements that we can make in American democracy.

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And so it is that citizen associations are a vital part of American democracy. Those of you who want to increase your participation in community endeavors and in political life may find that joining an association is the right calling for you. Just search out an association that meets your interests and could use your abilities. Or organize a new one. Depending upon your preference, you can concentrate upon community service or public policy advocacy. Or a combination. There's plenty to do. Your participation is needed and should be welcomed.

REAFFIRMATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Let us reaffirm that every citizen in a democracy has a responsibility to answer the call to some form of participation in civic and political life.

To those of who entered the political arena for the first time in 1992, I say, "Welcome. Please stay involved." To those who stuck with your party, I say, "Good for you. We need dedicated party loyalists in American democracy."

To those who remain on the sidelines of the political arena, preferring to confine your civic life to nonpolitical activities, I say, "That's fine. We need dedicated civic workers. But won't you also consider getting more involved in politics?" To those who are so apathetic, alienated, or too busy to

get involved in either politics or civic action, I plead, "Won't you lend a hand? We need your help to make this country achieve its full potential."

Full participation by the citizenry is the lifeblood of American democracy. All of us are called to be civic and political activists so that together we can keep our nation strong and vital.

Let us celebrate together the many ways we make our governments work effectively by practicing continuous, interactive consent of the governed. Let us explore together possible improvements that we can make in American democracy.

September 24, 1992

Prologue

Just What Is This "Consent of the Governed"?

We are instructed by the American Declaration of Independence that the just powers of governed are derived from the consent of the governed. Yet in the past couple of years millions of Americans have stood up and exclaimed,

"Wait a minute! I didn't consent to what's been going on. I never voted for the enormous federal deficit. I didn't want the government to ignore unemployment and other problems of a lagging economic. I never agreed to the mess the health care system is in. I didn't approve government officials looking out for themselves and the special interests that finance their reelection campaigns. I never consented to any of this!"

For this reason "throw the rascals out" became a dominant theme in of the 1992 election. "We want change" was another expression.

Naturally all the candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination campaigned for change, including the Bill Clinton, who became the party nominee. Then unexpectedly George Bush picked up this theme -- he who was in his twelfth consecutive year in power, first as vice-president and then as president. Yet, a huge block of the electorate wanted "none-of-the-above". So Ross Perot, business entrepreneur and amateur politician, emerged as a candidate unaffiliated with the dominant political parties. Then he couldn't stand the heat of electoral politics and backed off.

With an anti-incumbency mood sweeping the country, an unprecedented ___ members of the U.S. House of representatives retired or were defeated for reelection. Even so __ percent of the House membership was reelected. And __ out of __ U.S. senators running for reelection were successful. Either voters concluded that they were well represented (often the case), or they felt that "even if he is a rascal, he's our rascal!" (Or she.)

The events of 1992, rather than being an attack on our political system, have revealed its strength. We are able to bring about changes in office holders by the ballot rather than through revolution. The American voter spoke and was heard.

At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect it will have on the conduct of public business in the United States. Moreover, a large number of voters want even greater change than occurred in the 1992 election. They remain skeptical about the effectiveness of the consent process in American democracy today.

That being the case it is worthwhile to take a fresh look at the true meaning and the practical application of the consent of the governed in American democracy.

For the founders of the United States of America, "consent of the governed" was a phrase in common usage. It had been used for several hundred years by English writers who tried to explain why men and women, who seemed to be born free, would allow a government to reign over them. Among others John Locke, whose writings were very influential on the founders, talked a lot about consent, although he never defined it operationally.

*So it was natural that Thomas Jefferson penned "consent of the governed" into the Declaration of Independence. And it was natural for James Madison in the 39th *Federalist* essay to define a "republic" (his name for what we call "representative democracy") as "a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people."*

In practical terms the framers of the U.S. Constitution leaned more toward indirect than direct derivation. Among the officers of the new national government only members of the House of Representatives were elected directly by the voters. State legislators chose U.S. senators and the electors who gathered every four years to select the president. In nine of the thirteen states the legislature also appointed the governor. Moreover, the right to vote was generally limited to white, male property owners.

But it was a significant beginning in the right direction.

We've come a long ways in the last 200 years. Suffrage is now universal, for restrictions based upon property, race, gender, and age have been removed by the states and U.S. constitutional amendments.

All governors and U.S. senators are directly elected. Presidential electors are bidden to reflect the popular vote. Political parties nominate candidates and work for their election. Months-long campaigns feature intense interchange between candidates and citizens.

Moreover, we citizens are not content to sit back and wait for the next election to give our consent once again. Individuals lobby elected and appointed officials to influence their decisions. Advocacy organizations provide collective strength to lobbying efforts. Sometimes people assemble to express their grievances, thus sending a message to public officials.

Formal patterns of interaction between citizens and public officials are built into governmental operations. Public hearings and advisory committees are widespread. Citizen involvement in

community planning is commonplace.

Indeed, in the United States the manner of consent-giving has become so elaborate that it has become virtually a continuous process rather than merely a once-and-that's-it occurrence. Consent-giving events, such as periodic elections of public officials and votes-by-ballot on constitutional amendments and referendums, are preceded by months of campaigning. Soon after election many incumbents begin to think ahead toward the next election, and this affects their relations with constituents. Lobbying and other forms of citizen advocacy go on throughout the year, and so do formalized processes of citizen-public official interaction.

This is so much a part of American political life that citizens and public officials take it for granted. But from a world view, consent of the governed as a continuous, interactive process is one of the most significant achievements of American democracy. This is how sovereignty of the people is achieved in representative government in the United States.

So if you who feel that you haven't given your consent to what's been going on, you have had many opportunities to do so. At the same time let's acknowledge that the consent process is not perfect. If millions feel alienated from government and are distrustful of officeholders, improvements are needed in the way government is run and in the way consent of the governed is attained.

The chapters of this book give consideration to need improvements and offer suggestions for achieving much wider citizen involvement. Before turning to them, let's outline briefly what citizens can do to play fuller roles in the consent process.

***Voting** is the fundamental method for participation. Every U.S. citizen age 18 and older may vote, except for a few felons who have lost this right. Historically it is a hard-won privilege.*

It is time to reassert the concept that voting is a responsibility of all citizens. Not a duty imposed by law or moral preaching but a responsibility internal to one's basic belief and civic commitment.

We vote not merely for our personal self-interest, though that may be factor in our choice of candidates. Rather we should seek to promote the common good when we cast our ballot. We don't worry that our single vote doesn't yield much influence or that our favorite candidate doesn't have much of a chance. We don't refrain from voting because we don't like any of the candidates. After all, we have other remedies, ranging from write-in votes to greater involvement in politics in order to get better candidates. We vote because that is what we do as citizens in a democracy.

Civic activities offer us multitude of opportunities to practice our citizenship every day in the year.

There is a saying, "Want to live in a better neighborhood? Join your neighborhood association." This applies to every city and suburban dweller, rich, middle income, and poor. Residents of rural areas have equivalent organizations working for community betterment.

This slogan can have many permutations:

- *Want to have safe streets? Join a neighborhood watch.*
- *Want to keep youth out of trouble? Volunteer at the recreation center or get your civic organization to sponsor a youth program.*
- *Want to help the homeless? Collect food and clothing, serve meals at the soup kitchen, work for affordable housing.*
- *Want to reduce air pollution? Participate in an environmental group, join a carpool.*
- *Want more efficient local government? Form a study/action organization.*

The list could go on and on.

And so it is that citizen associations are a vital part of American democracy. Those of you who want to increase your participation in community endeavors and in political life may find that joining an association is the right calling for you. Just search out an association that meets your interests and could use your abilities. Or organize a new one. Depending upon your preference, you can concentrate upon community service or public policy advocacy. Or a combination. There's plenty to do. Your participation is needed and should be welcomed.

Participation in governmental decision-making is another calling. You can do this as an individual or as part of an advocacy organization.

Effective advocacy organizations understand that the final vote on a bill or the formal decision by an executive official is often the product of a months-long process. They keep in contact with decision makers throughout all stages of the process. They start early and stay involved persistently. They probe for points of influence and use various means of persuasion.

Advocacy organizations develop proposals, present their ideas to legislators and governmental executives, press for acceptance through direct and grassroots lobbying, oppose proposed policies and regulations considered inimical to their interests, seek media attention for their ideas, sometimes make campaign contributions and provide volunteers to candidates, and in many other ways interact with public officials. If they aren't heard, they stage marches and rallies to attract attention to their cause.

Many public officials take their own initiatives to bring citizens into governmental decision-making. They reach out to citizens to get their opinions, hear their complaints (and sometimes praise), and secure their participation in formulating public policy. Legislators hold public hearings, send out questionnaires, appear at community meetings, receive constituents at their office, meet people informally in their district. Elected chief executives and their appointed department heads form advisory committees, seek comments on draft reports and proposed regulations, attend community meetings, and send out staff to meet with citizen groups.

Citizens can seek out these official processes for citizen participation and work with public officials cooperatively. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation processes, citizens can promote improvements.

Work in political campaigns is another significant expression of citizenship. This can occur through a political party or the campaign organization of a particular candidate.

As a political party member you can work as a volunteer at party headquarters before and during campaigns. If you want deeper involvement, you can become a party officer, such as block captain, precinct leader, member of the central committee (city, county, state, or national). Party reform often starts in contests for these offices. You can become a delegate to the city, state, or national party convention. You take part in the party primary election by supporting particular candidates and then work to elect the party nominee in the general election.

If you are dissatisfied with the Democratic and Republican parties and despair of reforming them, you can affiliate with a third party. That's an honorable calling, for historically third parties have been a creative force in American politics by bringing attention to serious problems and unmet needs and by offering remedies, which sometimes the main parties later take over.

Or you may prefer to get involved in the campaign of independent candidates, as many people did for a while in 1992 in support of Ross Perot. On occasion this can be an important endeavor, though it lacks the continuity of participation over many years that political parties provide.

Whatever your entrée, different political campaigns have similar tasks to perform: get out mailings, make phone calls, hand out literature, distribute bumper stickers, put up yard signs, have house parties for candidates or for watching the candidate on television, help organize rallies, assist in fundraising, promote voter registration and then turnout on election day.

Running for office is one of the highest calling in a democracy. It is not for everyone, but there seems to be no shortage of candidates.

Some make a career of politics. They move from one elective position to another or settle in

one and stay a long time. Others gain appointive positions before or after holding elective office, or alternative between elective and appointive. Some enter elective office for one term or two, usually coming from a civic leadership role and returning there. There is a place for all. And for mutual respect.

If we think back to our founding period, we have to be impressed by the quality of the persons who served in elective office: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, to name only the first five presidents, and many others who were governors and held legislative positions.

In our own day we have had better elected officials that we are sometimes willing to admit. If we go back 65 years, we note that some of our presidents have been professional politicians: Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jerry Ford, George Bush. Others have had other careers: Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan. All had strengths and weaknesses. Some accomplished more than others. All were personally ambitious, but they realized that elective office is a high calling that goes far beyond ego fulfillment and enters the realm of working for a better society.

Mayors, county commissioners, township officials, governors, state legislators, members of city council and the U.S. Congress, and other holders of elective office understand this feeling. Women and men. Persons of all races, religions, and ethnic groups. Young, old, and middle-aged.

To be sure, a few of our elected officials are corrupted by pursuit of economic gain. Some are windbags, inflated with huge egos. Most, like the general run of the population, act from a mixture of motives, combining self-interest and concern for others. But by and large they are no worse or no better than the rest of us. Why should they be? They are who we are. We elect them, and frequently reelect them.

So let us reaffirm that every citizen in a democracy has a responsibility to answer the call to some form of participation in civic and political life.

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To those who remain on the sidelines, preferring to confine your civic life to nonpolitical activities, I ask, "Won't you join us? We need your contribution to politics." To those who are so apathetic, alienated, or too busy to get involved in either politics or civic action, I plead, "Won't you lend a hand? We need your help to make this country achieve its full potential."

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Prologue

Consent of the Governed Representative Government in a Participatory Mode

We are instructed by the American Declaration of Independence that the just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed. Yet in the past couple of years millions of Americans have stood up and exclaimed, "Wait a minute! I didn't consent to what's been going on. I never voted for the enormous federal deficit. I didn't want the government to ignore unemployment and other problems of a lagging economic. I never agreed to the mess the health care system is in. I don't approve of government officials looking out for themselves and the special interests that finance their reelection campaigns. I never consented to any of this!"

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With an anti-incumbency mood sweeping the country, an unprecedented ___ members of the U.S. House of representatives retired or were defeated for reelection. Even so ___ percent of the House membership was reelected. And ___ out of ___ U.S. senators running for reelection were successful. Either voters concluded that they were well represented (often the case), or they felt

that "even if he is a rascal, he's our rascal!" (Or she.)

The events of 1992, rather than being an attack on our political system, have revealed its strength. We are able to bring about changes in office holders by the ballot rather than through revolution. The American voter spoke and was heard.

At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect it will have on the conduct of public business in the United States. Moreover, a large number of voters want even greater change than occurred in the 1992 election. They remain skeptical about the effectiveness of the consent process in American democracy today.

That being the case it is worthwhile to take a fresh look at the true meaning and the practical application of the consent of the governed in American democracy. And especially how citizens at the grassroots can control and influence policy-makers functioning at state capitals and in Washington, at city hall and the county courthouse.

FOUNDERS' PERSPECTIVE

For the founders of the United States of America, "consent of the governed" was a phrase in common usage. It had been used for several hundred years by European writers who tried to explain why men and women, who seemed to be born free, would allow a government to reign over them. Among others John Locke, whose writings were very influential on the founders, talked a lot about consent, although he never defined it operationally.

So it was natural that Thomas Jefferson penned "consent of the governed" into the Declaration of Independence. And it was natural for James Madison in the 39th *Federalist* essay to define a

"republic" (his name for what we call today "representative democracy") as "a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people."

In practical terms the framers of the U.S. Constitution leaned more toward indirect than direct derivation of consent. Among the officers of the new national government only members of the House of Representatives were elected directly by the voters. State legislatures chose U.S. senators and the electors who gathered every four years to select the president. In nine of the thirteen states the legislature also appointed the governor. Moreover, the right to vote was generally limited to white male property owners.

The founders wanted this narrow electorate to choose the principal officers of government and let them take it from there. This was representative government in an elitist mode. It was a modest beginning for the consent process, but it was headed in the right direction.

NOW CONTINUOUS, INTERACTIVE CONSENT

We've come a long ways in the last 200 years. State laws and U.S. constitutional amendments have removed all voting restrictions based upon property, race, gender, and age. The right to vote is now universal.

All governors and U.S. senators are directly elected. Presidential electors are bidden to reflect the popular vote in their states. Political parties nominate candidates and work for their election. Months-long campaigns feature intense interchange between candidates and voters.

Moreover, we citizens are not content to sit back and wait for the next election to give our consent once again. Individuals lobby elected and appointed officials to influence their decisions.

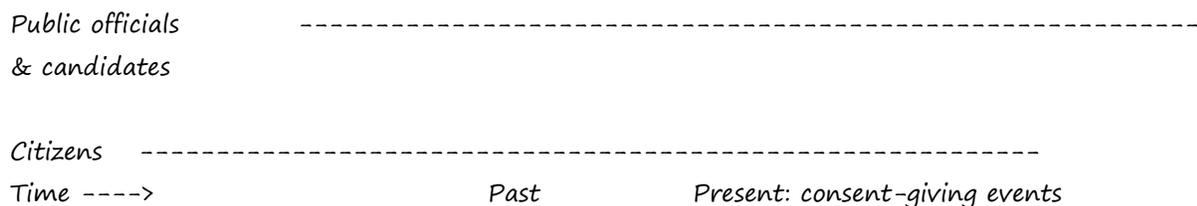
Advocacy organizations provide collective strength to lobbying efforts. Sometimes people assemble to express their grievances, thus sending a message to public officials.

Formal patterns of interaction between citizens and public officials are built into governmental operations. Public hearings and advisory committees are widespread. Citizen involvement in community planning is commonplace.

Indeed, in the United States the manner of consent-giving has become so elaborate that it has become virtually a continuous process rather than merely a once-and-that's-it occurrence. Consent-giving events, such as periodic elections of public officials and votes-by-ballot on constitutional amendments and referendums, are preceded by months of campaigning. Soon after election many incumbents begin to think ahead toward the next election, and this affects their relations with constituents. Lobbying and other forms of citizen advocacy go on throughout the year, and so do formalized processes of citizen-public official interaction.

Consent of the governed in the United States has become a continuous, interactive process. As such it has a past, a present, and a future. The past consists of tradition, established values, psychic memory, habitual attitudes, and past relationships among various actors. The present is "now", moving steadily ahead. The future consists of anticipated events and vision of hoped-for outcome.

Schematically continuous, interactive consent can be illustrated in the following manner:



Future

In this manner citizens are in touch with public officials day in and day out. Local, state, and national government have institutional arrangements to facilitate this relationship.

Because of these widespread practices American democracy operates through representative government in a participatory mode. It's incomplete because participation isn't as broad as it ought to be. But at least multiple opportunities are available, awaiting for more citizens to become engaged.

So if you feel that you haven't given your consent to what's been going on, you have had many opportunities to do so. At the same time let's acknowledge that the consent process is not perfect. If millions feel alienated from government and are distrustful of officeholders, improvements are needed in the way government is run and in the way consent of the governed is attained. Efforts are needed to draw more persons into the consent process on a regular basis.

HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

This book focuses on how to achieve much wider and truly meaningful citizen involvement in public affairs, especially at the grassroots. But before we get into details of needed improvements, let's review briefly the principal actions citizens can undertake as they participate in continuous, interactive consent-giving. We'll start with the electoral process and then look at ongoing governmental operations and civic activities.

Vote

Election day is the culmination of the electoral process, but it is preceded by months of

write-in votes to greater involvement in politics in order to get better candidates. We vote because that is what we do as citizens in a democracy.

Work in Political Campaigns

Another significant expression of citizenship is to become involved in political campaigns. This can occur through a political party or the campaign organization of a particular candidate.

As a political party member you can work as a volunteer at party headquarters before and during campaigns. If you want deeper involvement, you can become a party officer, such as block captain, precinct leader, member of the central committee (city, county, state, or national). Party reform often starts in contests for these offices. You can become a delegate to the city, state, or national party convention. You take part in the party primary election by supporting particular candidates and then work to elect the party nominee in the general election.

If you are dissatisfied with the Democratic and Republican parties and despair of reforming them, you can affiliate with a third party. That's an honorable calling, for historically third parties have been a creative force in American politics. They bring attention to serious problems and unmet needs, and they offer remedies, which sometimes the main parties later take over.

Or you may prefer to get involved in the campaign of independent candidates, as many people did for a while in 1992 in support of Ross Perot. On occasion this can be an important endeavor, though it lacks the continuity of participation over many years that political parties provide.

Whatever your entrée, different political campaigns have similar tasks to perform: get out mailings, make phone calls, hand out literature, distribute bumper stickers, put up yard signs, have house parties for candidates or for watching the candidate on television, help organize rallies, assist in fundraising, promote voter registration and then turnout on

election day.

Run for Office

Seeking public office is one of the highest calling in a democracy. It is not for everyone, but there seems to be no shortage of candidates for the 497,155 popularly elected offices in the United States.

Some make a career of politics. They move from one elective position to another or settle in one and stay a long time. Others gain appointive positions before or after holding elective office, or alternate between elective and appointive. Some enter elective office for one term or two, coming from a civic leadership role or from the world of business, and then returning there. There is a place for all. And for mutual respect.

If we think back to our founding period, we have to be impressed by the quality of the persons who served in elective office: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, to name the first five presidents, and many others who were governors and held

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In our own day we have had better elected officials that we are sometimes willing to admit. If we go back 65 years, we note that some of our presidents have been professional politicians: Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jerry Ford, George Bush. Others have had other careers: Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan. All had strengths and weaknesses. Some accomplished more than others. All were personally ambitious, but they realized that elective office is a high calling that goes far beyond ego fulfillment and enters the realm of working for a better society.

Mayors, county commissioners, township officials, governors, state legislators, members of city council and the U.S. Congress, elected school board members, and other holders of elective office understand this feeling.

Women and men. Persons of all races, religions, and ethnic groups.

Young, old, and middle-aged.

To be sure, a few of our elected officials are corrupted by pursuit of economic gain. Some are windbags, inflated with huge egos. Most, like the general run of the population, act from a mixture of motives, combining self-interest and concern for others. But by and large they are no worse or no better than the rest of us. Why should they be? They are who we are. We elect them, and frequently reelect them.

Participate in Governmental Decision-making

Every day of the year governmental officials make numerous policy decisions. Citizens are involved in many of them through intricate relationships, some initiated by public officials, some generated by citizen advocates.

Many public officials carry a commitment to citizen involvement. They reach out to citizens to get their opinions, hear their complaints (and sometimes praise), and secure their participation in formulating public policy. Legislators hold public hearings, send out questionnaires, appear at

community meetings, receive constituents at their office, meet people informally in their district. Elected chief executives and their appointed department heads form advisory committees, seek comments on draft reports and proposed regulations, attend community meetings, and send out staff to meet with citizen groups.

Many of these processes are extended over a period of months. For example, working out a community plan might occur in this manner:

Define ---> Set goals & ---> Specify projects ---> Agency ---> Public
---> Adoption by
problem objectives & activities approval
hearing legislative body

Where there are official arrangements for citizen participation, citizens can get involved in all the stages of this process and work cooperatively with public officials. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation, citizens can assert themselves and offer their views at the early stages, long before the formal public hearing.

involved persistently. They probe for points of influence and use various means of persuasion.

Advocacy organizations develop their own proposals, present their ideas to legislators and governmental executives, press for acceptance through direct and grassroots lobbying, oppose proposed policies and regulations considered inimical to their interests, seek media attention for their ideas, sometimes make campaign contributions and provide volunteers to candidates, and in many other ways interact with public officials. If they aren't heard, they stage marches and rallies to attract attention to their cause.

The combination of citizen advocacy and public official outreach deeply enriches the consent process and makes it a continuous endeavor.

Participate in Civic Activities

Another aspect of citizenship, going beyond the consent process, is the multitude of civic activities that millions of Americans engage in.

There is a saying, "Want to live in a better neighborhood? Join your neighborhood association." This applies to every city and suburban dweller, rich, middle income, and poor. Residents of rural areas have equivalent organizations working for community betterment. By extension it is applicable in states, regions, and the nation as a whole.

The slogan can have many permutations:

- *Want to have safe streets? Join a neighborhood watch.*
- *Want to keep youth out of trouble? Volunteer at the recreation center or get your civic organization to sponsor a youth program.*
- *Want to help the homeless? Collect food and clothing, serve meals at the soup kitchen, work for affordable housing.*
- *Want to reduce air pollution? Participate in an environmental group, join a carpool.*
- *Want more efficient government? Form a study/action organization.*

The list could go on and on.

Americans have a proclivity for forming citizen associations to get

things done. Some associations are oriented toward service and community improvement projects. Others concentrate mostly upon mutual benefits for their members, although from time to time they undertake community service activities.

Many associations realize that their concerns are affected by public policies and that some of the solutions they seek can be achieved through governmental action. Therefore, they become involved in public policy advocacy. Some devote their energies almost exclusively to this task.

Think of a significant public issue, and you'll find associations heavily engaged in public policy debate: civil rights, education, homelessness, unemployment, energy conservation, tax rates, highway safety, defense, foreign policy. Ask legislators and they'll tell you that they get more mail and receive more phone calls from associations and their members than from political party officials.

Like various aspects of the consent-giving process, civic activities have a

time dimension, as follows:

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|--|----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>Organize</i> | <i>---></i> | <i>Define goals and objectives</i> | <i>---></i> | <i>Initiate activities</i> | <i>Service to members Community service Public policy advocacy</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|--|----------------|--------------------------------|--|

These civic activities complement and intersect with governmental activities of public agencies.

And so it is that citizen associations are a vital part of American democracy. Those of you who want to increase your participation in community endeavors and in political life may find that joining an association is the right calling for you. Just search out an association that meets your interests and could use your abilities. Or organize a new one. Depending upon your preference, you can concentrate upon community service or public policy advocacy. Or a combination. There's plenty to do. Your participation is needed and should be welcomed.

REAFFIRMATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Let us reaffirm that every citizen in a democracy has a responsibility to answer the call to some form of participation in civic and political life.

To those of who entered the political arena for the first time in 1992, I say, "Welcome. Please stay involved." To those who stuck with your party, I say, "Good for you. We need dedicated party loyalists in American democracy."

To those who remain on the sidelines of the political arena, preferring to confine your civic life to nonpolitical activities, I say, "That's fine. We need dedicated civic workers. But won't you also consider getting more involved in politics?" To those who are so apathetic, alienated, or too busy to get involved in either politics or civic action, I plead, "Won't you lend a hand? We need your help to make this country achieve its full potential."

Full participation by the citizenry is the lifeblood of American democracy. All of us are called to be civic and political activists so that

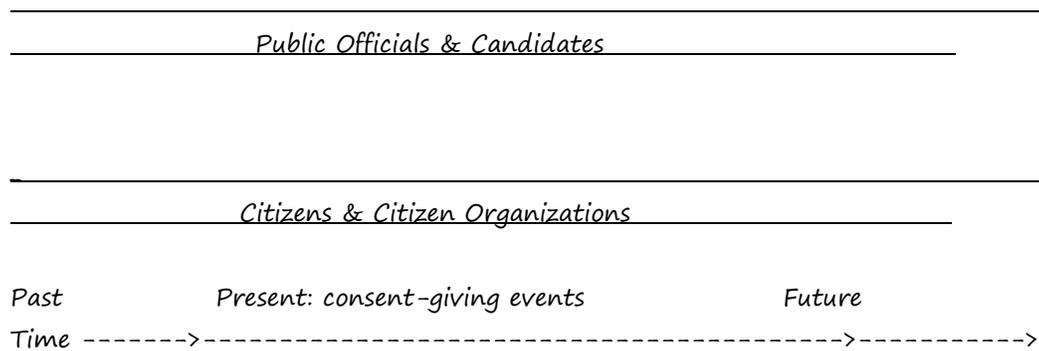
together we can keep our nation strong and vital.

Let us celebrate together the many ways we make our governments work effectively by practicing continuous, interactive consent of the governed. Let us explore together possible improvements that we can make in American democracy.

October 5, 1992

Consent of the governed in the United States has become a continuous, interactive process. As such it has a past, a present, and a future. The past consists of tradition, established values, psychic memory, habitual attitudes, and past relationships among various actors. The present is "now", moving steadily ahead. The future consists of anticipated events and vision of hoped-for outcome.

Schematically continuous, interactive consent can be illustrated as follows:



*In this manner citizens are in touch with public officials day in and day out. Local, state, and national government have institutional arrangements to facilitate this relationship. Because of these widespread practices American democracy can be described as **representative government in a participatory mode.***

*Many opportunities for participation are open to all who want to join in: voting, political parties, running for office, public hearings and community meetings, lobbying. Not all choose to participate. So, through self-section a kind of **representative participation** occurs -- with hope that the participants fairly represent the nonparticipants. Moreover, representative participation gains formal expression in public commissions, advisory committees, task forces, and neighborhood councils where a chosen few are expected to represent the broader citizenry, just as elected public officials are*

expected to represent the wider electorate.

In many respects representative participation is natural in a nation of 250 million people [check number]. In a complex society, one person can't do everything. Employment takes a lot of time, and so does parental responsibilities in families. In civic life some persons volunteer for social service or recreational leadership while others engage in political activities. Church, synagogue, and mosque absorb the time of many people. Many play sports and attend sporting events. Others are involved in music and the arts. Grandparents take care of grandchildren, and neighbors help one another. Because people are busy with varied activities, we shouldn't look for one hundred percent participation in consent-giving activities except for voting.

We should, however, be concerned whether self-selection yields sufficient representation of all segments of the population. And if it doesn't, we should find ways to overcome underrepresentation of left-out people. We should seek to make representative participation as broad as possible.

Even though multiple opportunities for participation in consent-giving activities are available, millions of Americans feel alienated from government and are distrustful of officeholders. This is a strong signal that major improvements are needed in the way government is run and in the way consent of the governed is attained. Efforts are needed to draw more persons into the consent process on a regular basis.

PART ONE. DEMOCRACY REQUIRES CONTINUOUS PARTICIPATION

Chapter One. Consent of the Governed: Continuous and Interactive

On Tuesday, November 3, 1992 xx million Americans voted for president of the United States. Proportionally this was the largest turnout of registered voters since 19__.¹

The 1992 campaign drew more attention from voters than any presidential election in a long time. As the campaign progressed, the candidates' flaws seemed to draw more attention than their strengths. To get a better reading on the candidates, a huge audience watched the three televised presidential debates with the third one attracting 91 million viewers. Candidates also appeared on television and radio talk shows to supplement public appearances and paid television ads. Although many voters went to the polls with a strong partisan commitment to their candidates, many others were dissatisfied with the choice and some remained undecided until election day.

On election night millions watched the results streaming in on their television sets. Lots of us stayed up beyond our usual bedtime. We tuned in the next morning for the latest results and watched the Wednesday evening news for the election wrap-up. The more intense among us poured through detailed results printed in the Wednesday and Thursday newspapers. Some pulled in reports on their home computers.

For the rest of the week into the weekend we talked about the results with our relatives, friends, and coworkers. Depending upon our view of the outcome, we were aglow or grumbled or were resigned to the "lesser evil."

By the following Monday we were back into life's routines. We felt we had done our civic duty. We had honored the commitment of the Declaration of Independence that the powers of government must be derived from the consent of the governed. We voted. We knew that a plurality of voters had given their consent to the person who would serve as president for the next four years -- and to a host of other elected officials who were on the ballot in the various states and localities.

¹ For the 1992 presidential election, __ million Americans age 18 and over were eligible to vote. Of these __ million were registered, and __ voted. Thus, __ percent of registered voters voted, and __ percent of eligible voters. The last time this percentage was exceeded occurred in 19__ when __ percent of registered voters and __ percent of eligible voters cast their ballots for president.

Now we would await the next set of primary and general elections to again participate in the consent process. Many hoped for better choices next time but would have to wait and see.

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A certain number of Americans, however, were not content to wait for the next election. For them election day was but a way station in the ongoing political process.

By Thursday, November 5 lobbyists in Washington, D.C. were busy figuring out the implications of the election. They searched for contacts in the Clinton transition team, sent them already-written position papers, and offered recommendations for appointments for top jobs in the new administration. They studied the background of newly elected members of Congress and tried to figure out who among their grassroots members had contacts with them. Coalitions of like-minded interests -- business, labor, agricultural, professional, social welfare, peace, environmental, and many more -- held series of meetings to plot their strategy for the new administration and the new Congress.

The same thing occurred in state capitols around the nation, especially in the __ states with a new governor but also in all the other states with newly elected legislators. Likewise in cities, counties, and townships with newly elected officials various advocacy organizations busied themselves with efforts to influence the newcomers.

By Monday, November 9 newly elected and reelected public officials were rested enough to begin working out plans for their new term in office. Perhaps as many as 80 to 90 percent of them began thinking about seeking reelection -- even before they had been sworn in for their new term. They mailed thank you notes to supporters and called the largest contributors. They analyzed election returns to discover their strengths and weaknesses, and they pondered how to shore up the soft spots.

Newly elected members of Congress and state legislators journeyed to the capital for briefings on legislative procedures, administrative support, office space, and fund allocation. Veterans from their party shared ideas for keeping in touch with constituents through newsletters, casework service, town meetings, and other techniques.

By Thanksgiving a number of aspirants for the Republican presidential nomination in 1996 had met with friends and advisors to talk about their chances and to lay plans. Likewise future candidates for governor, mayor, county executive, Congress, state legislatures, city and county councils, and school boards began positioning themselves for future campaigns

Thus, while most Americans went about other pursuits following the election, a considerable

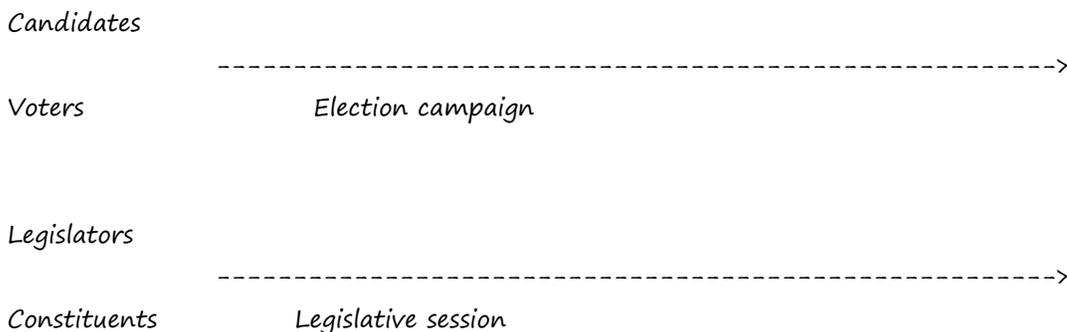
number -- perhaps one to two million -- continued their political involvement. They included the nearly half-million popularly elected officials (not all on the 1992 ballot), a least as many persons aspiring for their jobs, their active supporters, political party officials and volunteers, leaders of advocacy organizations, and lobbyists.

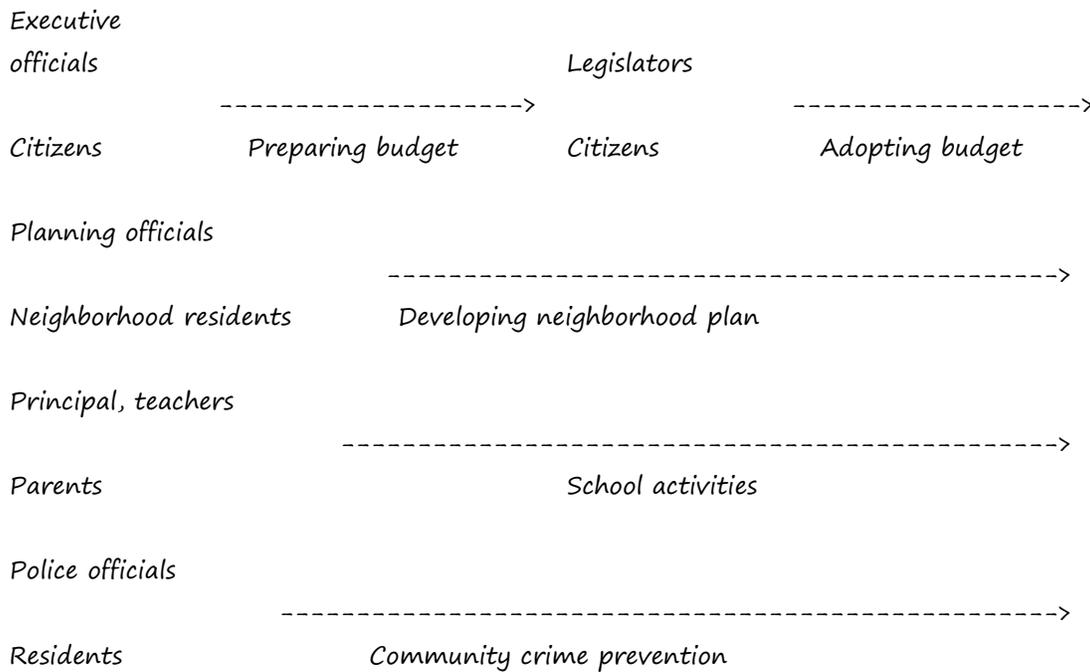
These political activists have a different understanding of what consent of the governed means. They see it not merely as episodic events like elections but more a process of continuous interaction between public officials and the electorate. Incumbents realize that their year-round relationships with constituents is probably more important in the quest for reelection than what they do during the few months of the election campaign. Aspirants for elective office know that they have to build support with a portion of the electorate long before the deadline for filing nominating petitions. Lobbyists are aware that drafting a bill is as crucial as the final vote in the legislative body. Advocacy organizations understand that persistent grassroots contacts with public officials is an important ingredient of success.

So it is that after 200 years experience with American democracy, **consent of the governed has become a continuous, interactive process.** Citizens who are constantly and persistently involved in this process are likely to be most influential -- whether they want to preserve the status quo or bring about change. Persons who limit their participation to voting -- or merely to complaining but not even voting -- must realize that they can never achieve the changes they desire unless they too enter into this continuous, interactive process more fully.

Actually many more people than politicians and lobbyists realize that consent is continuous and interactive. They just don't articulate their understanding in this manner.

If we look around, we will note that consent of the governed occurs through a lot of different processes involving particular public officials and candidates for office on the one hand and particular citizens on the other. These processes consist of sets of relationships moving through time. For example:





In this manner citizens are in touch with public officials day in and day out, week after week. Local, state, and national governments have institutional arrangements to facilitate this relationship, such as information dissemination, requests for views and comments, public hearings, advisory committees, and other methods for achieving citizen participation. Political parties and advocacy organizations play important roles. Because of these widespread practices American democracy can be described as **representative government in a participatory mode**.

Many opportunities for participation are open to all who want to join in: voting, political parties, running for office, public hearings and community meetings, lobbying. Not all choose to participate. So, through self-section a kind of **representative participation** occurs -- with hope that the participants fairly represent the nonparticipants.

Representative participation gains formal expression in public commissions, advisory committees, task forces, and neighborhood councils. In these situations a chosen few are expected to represent the broader citizenry, just as elected public officials are expected to represent the wider electorate.

In many respects representative participation is natural in a nation of 250 million people. In a complex society, one person can't do everything. Employment takes a lot of time, and so does parental responsibilities in families. In civic life some persons volunteer for social service or

recreational leadership while others engage in political activities. Church, synagogue, and mosque absorb the time of many people. Many play sports and attend sporting events. Others are involved in music and the arts. Grandparents take care of grandchildren, and neighbors help one another. Because people are busy with varied activities, we shouldn't look for one hundred percent participation in every consent-giving activity of American democracy, except for voting.

We should, however, be concerned whether the combination of self-selection and appointment to advisory bodies yields sufficient representation of all segments of the population. And if it doesn't, we should find ways to overcome underrepresentation of left-out people. We should seek to make representative participation as broad as possible.

Even though multiple opportunities for participation in consent-giving activities are available, millions of Americans feel alienated from government and are distrustful of officeholders. This was quite evident in the 1992 election campaign.

With an anti-incumbency mood sweeping the country, President George Bush was voted out of office, and an unprecedented ___ members of the U.S. House of representatives retired or were defeated for reelection. In ___ states a majority of voters approved proposals to limit the number of terms a member of Congress may serve.

Even so ___ percent of the House membership was reelected. And ___ out of ___ U.S. senators running for reelection were successful. Either voters concluded that they were well represented (often the case), or they felt that "even if he is a rascal, he's our rascal!" (Or she.)

The events of 1992, rather than being an attack on our political system, have revealed its strength. We are able to bring about changes in office holders by the ballot rather than through revolution. The American voter spoke and was heard. At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect it will have on the conduct of public business in the United States.

A large number of citizens want even greater change than occurred in the 1992 election. They remain skeptical about the effectiveness of the consent process in American democracy today. This is a strong signal that major improvements are needed in the way government is run and in the way consent of the governed is attained. Efforts are needed to draw more persons into the consent process on a regular basis.

Public officials can work to broaden participation. But it is also up to dissatisfied citizens to take initiatives. There are numerous ways to act. The next chapter outlines some of the principal methods for political involvement. The rest of the book considers them in much greater detail.

November 2, 1992

Chapter 2. How to Become Involved

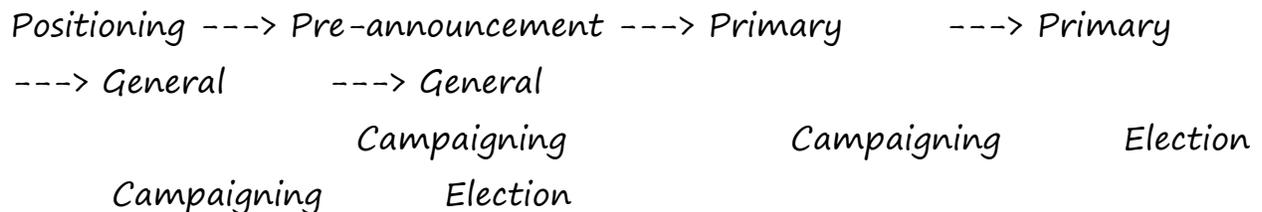
Consent of the governed as a continuous, interactive process requires widespread participation if it is to be truly effective. There are a multiplicity of ways this can occur. This chapter offers an overview, starting with the electoral process and then looking at ongoing governmental operations and civic activities.

These processes occur over a period of time. They have a past, a present, and a future. The past consists of tradition, established values, psychic memory, habitual attitudes, and past relationships among various actors. The present is "now", moving steadily ahead. The future consists of anticipated events and vision of hoped-for outcome.

Some of the consent-giving processes are tied to the calendar, especially elections. Others have events occurring in regular sequence, such as adoption of legislation and planning methodology. If citizen involvement to be meaningful, it must be timely.

Vote

Election day is the culmination of the electoral process, but it is preceded by months of positioning and campaigning, illustrated as follows:



Every U.S. citizen age 18 and older may vote, except for a few felons who have lost this right. Historically it is a hard-won privilege.

It is time to reassert the concept that voting is a responsibility of all citizens. Not a duty imposed by law or moral preaching but a responsibility internal to one's basic belief and civic commitment.

We vote not merely for our personal self-interest, though that may be factor in our choice of candidates. Rather we should seek to promote the common good when we cast our ballot. We don't worry that our single vote doesn't yield much influence or that our favorite candidate doesn't have much of a chance. We don't refrain from voting because we don't like any of the candidates. After all, we have other remedies, ranging from write-in votes to greater involvement in politics in order to get better candidates. We vote because that is what we do as citizens in a democracy.

Work in Political Campaigns

Another significant expression of citizenship is to become involved in political campaigns. This can occur through a political party or the campaign organization of a particular candidate.

As a political party member you can work as a volunteer at party headquarters before and during campaigns. If you want deeper involvement, you can become a party officer, such as block captain, precinct leader, member of the central committee (city, county, state, or national). Between them the Democratic and Republican parties have ___ party officers. Party reform and struggle for control often start in contests for these offices. You can become a delegate to the city, state, or national party convention. You take part in the party primary election by supporting particular candidates and then work to elect the party nominee in the general election.

If you are dissatisfied with the Democratic and Republican parties and despair of reforming them, you can affiliate with a third party. That's an honorable calling, for historically third parties have been a creative force in

American politics. They bring attention to serious problems and unmet needs, and they offer remedies, which sometimes the main parties later take over.

Or you may prefer to get involved in the campaign of independent candidates, as many people did in 1992 in support of Ross Perot. On occasion this can be an important endeavor, though it lacks the continuity of participation over many years that political parties provide.

Whatever your entrée, different political campaigns have similar tasks to perform: get out mailings, make phone calls, hand out literature, distribute bumper stickers, put up yard signs, have house parties for candidates or for watching the candidate on television, help organize rallies, assist in fundraising, promote voter registration and then turnout on election day.

Run for Office

Seeking public office is one of the highest calling in a democracy. It is not for everyone, but there seems to be no shortage of candidates for the 497,155 popularly elected offices in the United States.

Some make a career of politics. They move from one elective position to another or settle in one and stay a long time. Others gain appointive positions before or after holding elective office, or alternate between elective and appointive. Some enter elective office for one term or two, coming from a civic leadership role or from the world of business, and then returning there. There is a place for all. And for mutual respect.

If we think back to our founding period, we have to be impressed by

the quality of the persons who served in elective office: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, to name the first five presidents, and many others who were governors and held legislative positions.

In our own day we have had better elected officials that we are sometimes willing to admit. If we go back 65 years, we note that some of our presidents have been professional politicians: Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jerry Ford, George Bush. Others have had other careers: Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan. All had strengths and weaknesses. Some accomplished more than others. All were personally ambitious, but they realized that elective office is a high calling that goes far beyond ego fulfillment and enters the realm of working for a better society.

Mayors, county commissioners, township officials, governors, state legislators, members of city council and the U.S. Congress, elected school board members, and other holders of elective office understand this feeling. Women and men. Persons of all races, religions, and ethnic groups. Young, old, and middle-aged.

To be sure, a few of our elected officials are corrupted by pursuit of economic gain. Some are windbags, inflated with huge egos. Most, like the general run of the population, act from a mixture of motives, combining self-interest and concern for others. But by and large they are no worse or no better than the rest of us. Why should they be? They are who we are. We elect them, and frequently reelect them.

Participate in Governmental Decision-making

Every day of the year governmental officials make numerous policy decisions. Citizens are involved in many of them through intricate relationships, some initiated by public officials, some generated by citizen advocates.

Many public officials carry a commitment to citizen involvement. They reach out to citizens to get their opinions, hear their complaints (and sometimes praise), and secure their participation in formulating public policy. Legislators hold public hearings, send out questionnaires, appear at community meetings, receive constituents at their office, meet people informally in their district. Elected chief executives and their appointed department heads form advisory committees, seek comments on draft reports and proposed regulations, attend community meetings, and send out staff to meet with citizen groups.

Many of these processes are extended over a period of months. For example, working out a community plan might occur in this manner:

Define ---> Set goals & ---> Specify projects ---> Agency ---> Public
---> Adoption by
problem objectives & activities approval
hearing legislative body

Where there are official arrangements for citizen participation, citizens can get involved in all the stages of this process and work cooperatively with public officials. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation, citizens can assert themselves and offer their views at the early stages, long before the formal public hearing.

Indeed, citizens don't have to wait to be asked to participate. They

The combination of citizen advocacy and public official outreach deeply enriches the consent process and makes it a continuous endeavor.

Participate in Civic Activities

Another aspect of citizenship, going beyond the consent process, is the multitude of civic activities that millions of Americans engage in.

There is a saying, "Want to live in a better neighborhood? Join your neighborhood association." This applies to every city and suburban dweller, rich, middle income, and poor. Residents of rural areas have equivalent organizations working for community betterment. By extension it is applicable in states, regions, and the nation as a whole.

The slogan can have many permutations:

- *Want to have safe streets? Join a neighborhood watch.*
- *Want to keep youth out of trouble? Volunteer at the recreation center or get your civic organization to sponsor a youth program.*
- *Want to help the homeless? Collect food and clothing, serve meals at the soup kitchen, work for affordable housing.*
- *Want to reduce air pollution? Participate in an environmental group, join a carpool.*
- *Want more efficient government? Form a study/action organization.*

The list could go on and on.

Americans have a proclivity for forming citizen associations to get things done. Some associations are oriented toward service and community improvement projects. Others concentrate mostly upon mutual benefits for their members, although from time to time they undertake community service activities.

Many associations realize that their concerns are affected by public policies and that some of the solutions they seek can be achieved through governmental action. Therefore, they become involved in public policy advocacy. Some devote their energies almost exclusively to this task.

Think of a significant public issue, and you'll find associations heavily engaged in public policy debate: civil rights, education, homelessness, unemployment, energy conservation, tax rates, highway safety, defense, foreign policy. Ask legislators and they'll tell you that they get more mail and receive more phone calls from associations and their members than from political party officials.

Like various aspects of the consent-giving process, civic activities have a time dimension, as follows:

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| | | | Service to members |
| Organize | ---> Define goals | ---> Initiate | Community service |
| | and objectives | activities | Public policy advocacy |

These civic activities complement and intersect with governmental activities of public agencies.

And so it is that citizen associations are a vital part of American democracy. Those of you who want to increase your participation in community endeavors and in political life may find that joining an association is the right calling for you. Just search out an association that meets your interests and could use your abilities. Or organize a new one. Depending upon your preference, you can concentrate upon community service or public policy advocacy. Or a combination. There's plenty to do. Your participation is needed and should be welcomed.

REAFFIRMATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Let us reaffirm that every citizen in a democracy has a responsibility to answer the call to some form of participation in civic and political life.

To those of who entered the political arena for the first time in 1992, I say, "Welcome. Please stay involved." To those who stuck with your party, I say, "Good for you. We need dedicated party loyalists in American democracy."

To those who remain on the sidelines of the political arena, preferring to confine your civic life to nonpolitical activities, I say, "That's fine. We need dedicated civic workers. But won't you also consider getting more involved in politics?" To those who are so apathetic, alienated, or too busy to get involved in either politics or civic action, I plead, "Won't you lend a hand? We need your help to make this country achieve its full potential."

Full participation by the citizenry is the lifeblood of American democracy. All of us are called to be civic and political activists so that together we can keep our nation strong and vital.

Let us celebrate together the many ways we make our governments work effectively by practicing continuous, interactive consent of the governed. Let us explore together possible improvements that we can make in American democracy.

November 2, 1992

PART ONE. DEMOCRACY REQUIRES CONTINUOUS PARTICIPATION

Chapter 1. Consent Is Continuous and Interactive

The American voter accomplished a great feat in 1992. Not only those who voted on the winning side for president and other candidates. Everyone who voted.

Disproving the pessimists who described American voters as apathetic and alienated, 91 million of us watched the television debates of presidential candidates George Bush, Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot. We followed other aspects of the campaign. We carefully examined the choices available. We agonized. We deplored the negative campaigning, but we hung in there. Finally 104 million citizens voted for president and for many other elective public officials. We chose.

In 1992 the majority of voters in the presidential election opted for change: 43 percent voting for Bill Clinton and 19 percent for Ross Perot. The same election produced 110 new members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the most since 1948 -- 25 percent of the membership. Eleven new members [possibly 12] were elected to the U.S. Senate -- 11 percent of its membership.

Even so, in a year when anti-incumbency ran strong, 93 percent of House members running for reelection were victorious. In the U.S. Senate, four incumbents were defeated, but 23 others were victorious, a 85 percent success rate [with two undecided at this writing].

Thus, for national offices we opted for some continuity, some change. In a similar fashion most incumbents seeking reelection in state and local offices were successful, but some lost. In addition to the newcomers who defeated incumbents, others won in contests for open seats. We the American people had choices, and we chose. We changed some officeholders and retained others. We spoke and our voice was heard.

At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect the 1992 election will have on the conduct of public business in the United States. That will depend both upon how effectively public officials perform and how energetically and persistently citizens participate in the political process on a continuing basis.

As we ponder the future effectiveness of American democracy, we can properly return to fundamental principles as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence. Reversing the sequence of its opening statement, we find a superb description of the why and wherefore of government:

Who?

The people

| | |
|-------------|---|
| How? | through their consent |
| Do what? | institute government |
| Why? | to secure inalienable rights |
| Which ones? | life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness |
| For whom? | equally for all persons |

In American democracy we the people are sovereign. We have the supreme power. We have the right to prescribe the form of government, the right to select those who govern in our behalf, and the right to continuously participate in formation of public policy. Our government is just only to the extent that it is derived from our consent and respects the equal rights of all citizens.

This means that in American democracy we citizens are far more than stockholders choosing a board of directors, selecting a management team, and letting them run the business. We are persons who constantly interact with our legislators, our elected executives, and those whom they appoint.

We citizens are not content to sit back and wait for the next election to give our consent once again or elect somebody else. As individuals, we lobby elected and appointed officials to influence their decisions. We form advocacy organizations to provide collective strength to lobbying efforts. Sometimes we assemble with like-minded people to express our grievances, thus sending a message to public officials.

Moreover, formal patterns of interaction between citizens and public officials are built into governmental operations. Public hearings and advisory committees are widespread. Citizen participation in community planning is commonplace. Citizens are involved in implementation of numerous public programs and often undertake parallel civic activities.

Our participation is a continuous process, not merely a series of disconnected episodes. Consent-giving events, such as periodic elections of public officials and votes-by-ballot on constitutional amendments and referendums, are preceded by months of campaigning. Soon after election many incumbents begin to think ahead toward the next election, and this affects their relations with constituents. Persons positioning themselves to run for public office also establish relationships with the electorate. Lobbying and other forms of citizen advocacy go on throughout the year. So do formalized processes of citizen participation in public decision making.

Thus, we can say that after 200 years of American democracy **consent of the governed in the United States has become a continuous, interactive process.**

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For those of you who have renewed your commitment to active involvement in American democracy, the concept of consent as continuous and interactive can provide a useful framework.

You will find that some of the consent-giving processes are tied to the calendar, especially elections. Others have stages occurring in regular sequence, such as adoption of legislation, preparing budgets, and drawing up community plans.

Politicians and lobbyists understand this. They focus not merely on specific decisions but rather on the entire decision-making process from beginning to end. They know when and how to exercise their influence.

Citizen activists likewise need to realize that to be influential their involvement must have longevity and also must be timely and properly directed. This can be seen in three very common sets of decisions in American democracy: elections, legislation, and community planning.

Elections

In the electoral process politicians understand that election day is but a culmination of months of positioning and campaigning that goes through several major stages.

PRELIMINARIES

Positioning -----> Lining up support -----> Announcement of candidacy

SEEKING NOMINATION (several patterns)

For local & state offices in some states:

Primary campaigning -----> Primary election

For local & state offices in other states:

Party convention + option of -----> Challenge primary election

For U.S. president:

State primaries, caucuses, conventions -----> National convention

GENERAL ELECTION

Campaigning -----> Voting

Well before the deadline for filing nominating petitions, potential candidates obtain commitments for support, political leaders form alliances, and some potential candidates fall by the wayside. Interaction between candidates and the electorate begins during the positioning period. Promises made by potential candidates then and during the formal campaign will affect policy decisions made months later if they are elected to office.

Legislation

In the enactment of legislation lobbyists know that a new law is the product of a months-long process. In unicameral legislative bodies, such as most city and county councils and the Nebraska legislature, the major steps are these:

Drafting a bill ----> Introduction ----> Committee consideration ----> Floor action ----> Approval by chief executive

In bicameral bodies, such as the U.S. Congress and 49 state legislatures, a bill passed by one house goes to the other house for committee consideration and floor action. Then differences are resolved by a conference committee. The bill then goes back to the two houses for final action before going to the president or governor.

Skilled lobbyists are involved in all stages. They may offer a draft bill or look over what legislators and administrative officials have drafted. They help line up sponsors within the legislative body. They testify at public hearings and confer with committee members. They mobilize grassroots support. Sometimes they push for floor amendments. They urge the chief executive to approve or veto the legislation.

In contrast, many citizens concerned about a particular bill do not become involved until legislation is ready for a floor vote. They urge approval or defeat or for particular amendments, but the fundamental shape of the legislation is rarely altered at this late stage.

Community Planning

In planing improvement projects public officials are aware that the adopted plan is the result of many months of study and design. For a neighborhood plan which will be adopted by the city planning commission and the city council the process is as follows:

DEVELOPING PLAN

Define problem ----> Set goals & objectives ----> Delineata land use & specify projects ----> Approval by planning director

GAINING APPROVAL

Planning board hearing -----> Planning board approval -----> Council hearing -----> Council approval

The final plan is greatly influenced by how the problem is defined and what objectives are

established. Citizens who wait until the public hearing to offer their views may discover that options they preferred have already been precluded.

In contrast, where there are official arrangements for citizen participation, citizens can get involved in all the stages of community planning and work cooperatively with public officials. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation, citizens to be influential must assert themselves and offer their views at the early stages, long before the formal public hearing.

Thus we see that effective citizen participation in public policy formulation requires meaningful involvement from the earliest stage until final, formal decisions occur. This is true for elections, enactment of legislation, adoption of plans, and other major public decisions. In this manner consent of the governed gains full expression. The achieves representative government in a participatory mode.

For this to happen, public officials must have a strong commitment to full participation by the citizenry, and many, many citizens must be actively engaged in continuous interaction with public officials. Democracy of this sort isn't easy to obtain and sustain, but it's worth it.

It can result in a high quality of public decisions, based upon intimate knowledge of what the people want and will support. And it can yield a nation of citizens who have trust and confidence that their governments are functioning in a manner they desire.

Thus it is that "consent of the governed" is not merely a ringing phrase from the Declaration of Independence. Continuous, interactive consent-giving is an operational tool for American democracy.

November 10, 1992

PART ONE. DEMOCRACY REQUIRES CONTINUOUS PARTICIPATION

Chapter 1. Consent Is Continuous and Interactive

The American voter accomplished a great feat in 1992. Not only those who voted on the winning side for president and other candidates. Everyone who voted.

Disproving the pessimists who described American voters as apathetic and alienated, 91 million of us watched the television debates of presidential candidates George Bush, Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot. We followed other aspects of the campaign. We carefully examined the choices available. We agonized. We deplored the negative campaigning, but we hung in there. Finally 104 million citizens voted for president and for many other elective public officials. We chose.

In 1992 the majority of voters in the presidential election opted for change: 43 percent voting for Bill Clinton and 19 percent for Ross Perot. The same election produced 110 new members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the most since 1948 -- 25 percent of the membership. Twelve new members were elected to the U.S. Senate -- 12 percent of its membership.

Even so, in a year when anti-incumbency ran strong, 88 percent of House members running for reelection were victorious. In the U.S. Senate, five incumbents were defeated, but 23 others were victorious, a 82 percent success rate.

Thus, for national offices we opted for some continuity along with some change. In a similar fashion most incumbents seeking reelection in state and local offices were successful, but some lost. Some of the state and local newcomers who defeated incumbents while others won contests for open seats. We the American people had choices, and we made our decisions. We changed some

officeholders and retained others. We spoke and our voice was heard.

At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect the 1992 election will have on the conduct of public business in the United States. That will depend both upon how effectively public officials perform and how energetically and persistently citizens participate in the political process on a continuing basis.

As we ponder the future effectiveness of American democracy, we can properly return to fundamental principles as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence. Reversing the sequence of its opening statement, we find a superb description of the why and wherefore of government:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Who?</i> | <i>The people</i> |
| <i>How?</i> | <i>through their consent</i> |
| <i>Do what?</i> | <i>institute government</i> |
| <i>Why?</i> | <i>to secure inalienable rights</i> |
| <i>Which ones?</i> | <i>life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness</i> |
| <i>For whom?</i> | <i>equally for all persons</i> |

In American democracy we the people are sovereign. We have the supreme power. We have the right to prescribe the form of government, the right to select those who govern in our behalf, and the right to continuously participate in formation of public policy. Our government is just only to the extent that it is derived from our consent and respects the equal rights of all citizens.

This means that in American democracy we citizens are not merely customers receiving

governmental services. And we are far more than stockholders choosing a board of directors, selecting a management team, and letting them run the business. We are persons who first decide who shall govern, and then we constantly interact with our legislators, our elected executives, and those whom they appoint.

We citizens are not content to sit back and wait for the next election to give our consent once again or elect somebody else. As individuals, we lobby elected and appointed officials to influence their decisions. We form advocacy organizations to provide collective strength to lobbying efforts. Sometimes we assemble with like-minded people to express our grievances, thus sending a message to public officials.

Moreover, formal patterns of interaction between citizens and public officials are built into governmental operations. Public hearings and advisory committees are widespread. Citizen participation in community planning is commonplace. Citizens are involved in implementation of numerous public programs and often undertake parallel civic activities.

Our participation is a continuous process, not merely a series of disconnected episodes. Consent-giving events, such as periodic elections of public officials and votes-by-ballot on constitutional amendments and referendums, are preceded by months of campaigning. Soon after election many incumbents begin to think ahead toward the next election, and this affects their relations with constituents. Persons positioning themselves to run for public office also establish relationships with the electorate. Lobbying and other forms of citizen advocacy go on throughout the year. So do formalized processes of citizen participation in public decision making.

Thus, we can say that after 200 years of American democracy *consent of the governed in the United States has become a continuous, interactive process.*

For those of you who have renewed your commitment to active involvement in American democracy, the concept of consent as continuous and interactive can provide a useful framework.

You will find that some of the consent-giving processes are tied to the calendar, especially elections. Others have stages occurring in regular sequence, such as adoption of legislation, preparing budgets, and drawing up community plans.

Politicians and lobbyists understand this. They focus not merely on specific decisions but rather on the entire decision-making process from beginning to end. They know when and how to exercise their influence.

Citizen activists likewise need to realize that to be influential their involvement must have longevity and also must be timely and properly directed. This can be seen in three very common sets of decisions in American democracy: elections, legislation, and community planning.

Elections

In the electoral process politicians understand that election day is but a culmination of months of positioning and campaigning that goes through several major stages.

PRELIMINARIES

Positioning -----> Lining up support -----> Announcement of candidacy

SEEKING NOMINATION (several patterns)

Skilled lobbyists are involved in all stages. They may offer a draft bill or look over what legislators and administrative officials have drafted. They help line up sponsors within the legislative body. They testify at public hearings and confer with committee members. They mobilize grassroots support. Sometimes they push for floor amendments. They urge the chief executive to approve or veto the legislation.

In contrast, many citizens concerned about a particular bill do not become involved until legislation is ready for a floor vote. They may urge approval or defeat of particular amendments, but the fundamental shape of the legislation is rarely altered at this late stage.

Community Planning

In planing improvement projects public officials are aware that the adopted plan is the result of many months of study and design. For a neighborhood plan which will be adopted by the city planning commission and the city council the process is as follows:

DEVELOPING PLAN

Define problem ----> Set goals & objectives ----> Delineate land use & specify projects ----> Approval by planning director

GAINING APPROVAL

Planning board hearing -----> Planning board approval -----> Council hearing -----> Council approval

The final plan is greatly influenced by how the problem is defined and what objectives are established. Citizens who wait until the public hearing to offer their views may discover that options they preferred have already been precluded.

In contrast, where there are official arrangements for citizen participation, citizens can get involved in all the stages of community planning and work cooperatively with public officials. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation, citizens to be influential must can assert themselves and offer their views at the early stages, long before the formal public hearing.

Thus we see that effective citizen participation in public policy formulation requires meaningful involvement from the earliest stage until final, formal decisions occur. This is true for elections, enactment of legislation, adoption of plans, and other major public decisions. In this

manner consent of the governed gains full expression. The result is representative government in a participatory mode.

For this to happen, public officials must have a strong commitment to full participation by the citizenry, and many, many citizens must be actively engaged in continuous interaction with public officials. Democracy of this sort isn't easy to obtain and sustain, but it's worth it.

It can result in a high quality of public decisions, based upon intimate knowledge of what the people want and will support. And it can yield a nation of citizens who have trust and confidence that their governments are functioning in a manner they desire.

Thus it is that "consent of the governed" is not merely a ringing phrase from the Declaration of Independence. Continuous, interactive consent-giving is an operational tool for American democracy.

December 7, 1992

Chapter 1.

In 1992 millions of Americans renewed their commitment to participation in the political process. To be sure, many voters were dissatisfied with the choices offered during the primary season. This opened the door for Ross Perot's independent candidacy. But by fall Republican loyalists were solidly behind George Bush, and faithful Democrats rallied in support of Bill Clinton. Still the number of undecided and vacillating voters ran high. Rather than being apathetic, voters took seriously their responsibility to choose, and 91 million people watched the third presidential candidates debate.

Over 100 million citizens voted for president. It was the highest percentage of participation since 1960, another transitional year in American democracy. Of these voters, __ percent favored change: __ percent for Bill Clinton and __ percent for Ross Perot.

The same election produced __ new members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the most since 1932 at the depth of the Great Depression. Even so, in a year when anti-incumbency ran strong, __ percent of House members running for reelection were victorious. Of the __ who lost, __ were defeated in the primary election and __ lost in the general election. In the U.S. Senate, one incumbent running for election lost in the primary and three lost in the general election, but __ other incumbents running for reelection were victorious.

In 1992 we reaffirmed the commitment of the Declaration of Independence that the just powers of government must be derived from the consent of the governed. The American people had choices, and they chose. They changed some officeholds and retained others. The American voter spoke and was heard.

At least at the polls. It remains to be seen what effect the 1992 election will have on the conduct of public business in the United States. That will depend both upon how effectively public officials perform and how energetically and persistently citizens participate in the political process.

Chapter 2. How to Become Involved

Consent of the governed as a continuous, interactive process requires widespread participation of the citizenry if it is to be truly effective. This can occur in a multiplicity of ways. Citizens have numerous opportunities. It's a matter of choosing of how best to get involved.

In a complex society, one person can't do everything. For many, earning a living takes a lot of time. So does parental responsibilities in families. In civic life some persons volunteer for social service or recreational leadership while others engage in political activities. Church, synagogue, and mosque absorb the creative energies of many people. Many play sports and attend sporting events. Others are involved in music and the arts. Grandparents take care of grandchildren, and neighbors help one another.

Faced with these many opportunities and obligations, not every citizen chooses to become actively involved in the political process. Those that do have many choices: work in a political party, run for public office, help with political campaigns, attend public hearings and community meetings, lobby, be part of an advocacy organization. Through self-selection a kind representative participation comes about. Active participants represent other persons who are not involved.

Representative participation gains formal expression in public commissions, advisory committees, task forces, and neighborhood councils. In these situations a chosen few are expected to represent the broader citizenry, just as in representative government elected public officials are expected to represent the wider electorate.

Except for voting we shouldn't aspire for one hundred percent participation in every consent-giving activity of American democracy. We should, however, be concerned that the combination of self-selection and appointment to advisory bodies yields sufficient representation of all segments of the population. If it doesn't, we should find ways to overcome underrepresentation of left-out people. We should seek to make representative participation as broad as possible.

This chapter offers an overview of some of the major consent-giving activities that are open to widespread participation. Later chapters go into them greater detail.

Vote

Every U.S. citizen age 18 and older may vote, except for a few felons who have lost this right. Historically it is a hard-won privilege.

It is time to reassert the concept that voting is a responsibility of all citizens. Not a duty

imposed by law or moral preaching but a responsibility internal to one's basic belief and civic commitment.

We vote not merely for our personal self-interest, though that may be factor in our choice of candidates. Rather we should seek to promote the common good when we cast our ballot. We don't worry that our single vote doesn't yield much influence or that our favorite candidate doesn't have much of a chance. We don't refrain from voting because we don't like any of the candidates. After all, we have other remedies, ranging from write-in votes to greater involvement in politics in order to get better candidates. We vote because that is what we do as citizens in a democracy.

Work in Political Campaigns

Long before election day we can express our citizenship by becoming involved in political campaigns. This can occur through a political party or the campaign organization of a particular candidate.

Political party activists can work as volunteers at party headquarters before and during campaigns. Some become party officers, such as block captains, precinct leaders, members of a central committee (city, county, state, or national). Between them the Democratic and Republican parties have approximately 100,000 party offices, most of them at the local level. Party reform and struggle for control often start in contests for these offices. Party activists can become delegates to the city, state, or national party convention. They take part in the party primary election by supporting particular candidates and then work to elect the party nominee in the general election.

Persons dissatisfied with the Democratic and Republican parties and who despair of reforming them can affiliate with a third party. That's an honorable calling, for historically third parties have been a creative force in American democracy. They bring attention to serious problems and unmet needs, and they offer remedies, which sometimes the main parties later take over.

Others prefer to get involved in the campaign of independent candidates, as many people did in 1992 in support of Ross Perot. On occasion this can be an important endeavor, though it lacks the continuity of participation over many years that political parties provide.

Whatever the entree, different political campaigns have similar tasks to perform: get out mailings, make phone calls, hand out literature, distribute bumper stickers, put up yard signs, have house parties for candidates or for watching the candidate on television, help organize rallies, assist in fundraising, promote voter registration and then voter turnout on election day.

Run for Office

Seeking public office is one of the highest calling in a democracy. It is not for everyone, but there seems to be no shortage of candidates for the 497,155 popularly elected offices in the United States.

Some make a career of politics. They move from one elective position to another or settle in one and stay a long time. Others gain appointive positions before or after holding elective office, or alternate between elective and appointive. Some enter elective office for one term or two, coming from a civic leadership role or from the world of business, and then returning there. There is a place for all. And for mutual respect.

If we think back to our founding period, we have to be impressed by the quality of the persons who served in elective office: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, to name the first five presidents, and many others who were governors and held legislative positions.

In our own day we have had better elected officials that we are sometimes willing to admit. If we go back 65 years, we note that some of our presidents have been professional politicians: Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jerry Ford, George Bush, and now Bill Clinton. Others have had other careers: Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan. All had strengths and weaknesses. Some accomplished more than others. All were personally ambitious, but they realized that elective office is a high calling that goes far beyond ego fulfillment and enters the realm of working for a better society.

Mayors, county commissioners, township officials, governors, state legislators, members of city and county councils and the U.S. Congress, elected school board members, and other holders of elective office understand this feeling. Women and men. Persons of all races, religions, and ethnic groups. Young, old, and middle-aged.

To be sure, a few of our elected officials are corrupted by pursuit of economic gain. Some are windbags, inflated with huge egos. Most, like the general run of the population, act from a mixture of motives, combining self-interest and concern for others. But by and large they are no worse or no better than the rest of us. Why should they be? They are who we are. We elect them, and frequently reelect them.

Participate in Governmental Decision-making

Every day of the year governmental officials make numerous policy decisions. Citizens are involved in many of them through intricate relationships, some initiated by public officials, some generated by citizen advocates.

Many public officials carry a commitment to citizen involvement. They reach out to citizens to get their opinions, hear their complaints (and sometimes praise), and secure their participation in formulating public policy. Legislators hold public hearings, send out questionnaires, appear at community meetings, receive constituents at their office, meet people informally in their district. Elected chief executives and their appointed department heads form advisory committees, seek comments on draft reports and proposed regulations, attend community meetings, and send out staff to meet with citizen groups.

Many of these processes are extended over a period of months. This includes working out neighborhood plans, planning a community development program, preparing the annual budget of an agency or a governmental unit, evaluating performance of a particular service, planning a new public facility, such as a school, recreation center, regional park, a light-rail transportation system.

Many governmental units set up advisory bodies to help in such planning. However, citizens don't have to wait to be asked to participate. They can initiate their own contact with public officials, as individuals and through advocacy organizations, in order to influence public policy. That's a vital part of democracy and the consent process.

In the legislative process citizens can participate at public hearings and at town meetings attended by legislators. They can engage in direct lobbying at city hall, county court house, state capitol, and in Washington, D.C. They can organize grassroots lobbying campaigns. Citizen activists can follow bills from drafting to final enactment.

In dealing with both executive and legislative decision makers, proficient advocacy organizations keep in contact with key officials throughout all stages of the decision-making process. They start early and they stay involved persistently. They probe for points of influence and use various means of persuasion.

Advocacy organizations develop their own proposals, present their ideas to legislators and governmental executives, press for acceptance through direct and grassroots lobbying, oppose proposed policies and regulations considered inimical to their interests, seek media attention for their ideas, sometimes make campaign contributions and provide volunteers to candidates, and in many other ways interact with public officials. If they aren't heard, they stage marches and rallies to attract attention to their cause.

The combination of citizen advocacy and public official outreach deeply enriches the consent process and makes it a continuous endeavor.

Participate in Civic Activities

Another aspect of citizenship, going beyond the consent process, is the multitude of civic activities that millions of Americans engage in.

There is a saying, "Want to live in a better neighborhood? Join your neighborhood association." This applies to every city and suburban dweller, rich, middle income, and poor. Residents of rural areas have equivalent organizations working for community betterment. By extension it is applicable in states, regions, and the nation as a whole.

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- Want to have safe streets? Join a neighborhood watch.
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- Want to help the homeless? Collect food and clothing, serve meals at the soup kitchen, work for affordable housing.
- Want to reduce air pollution? Participate in an environmental group, join a carpool.
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The list could go on and on.

Americans have a proclivity for forming citizen associations to get things done. Some associations are oriented toward service and community improvement projects. Others concentrate mostly upon mutual benefits for their members, although from time to time they undertake community service activities.

Many associations realize that their concerns are affected by public policies and that some of the solutions they seek can be achieved through governmental action. Therefore, they become involved in public policy advocacy. Some devote their energies almost exclusively to this task.

Think of a significant public issue, and you'll find associations heavily engaged in public policy debate: civil rights, education, homelessness, unemployment, energy conservation, tax rates, highway safety, defense, foreign policy. Ask legislators and they'll tell you that they get more mail and receive more phone calls from associations and their members than from political party officials.

Like various aspects of the consent-giving process, civic activities have a time dimension, as follows:

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Organize | ----> Define goals and objectives | ----> Initiate activities | -----> Service to members Community service Public policy advocacy |
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These civic activities complement and intersect with governmental activities of public agencies.

And so it is that citizen associations are a vital part of American democracy. Those of you who want to increase your participation in community endeavors and in political life may find that joining an association is the right calling for you. Just search out an association that meets your interests and could use your abilities. Or organize a new one. Depending upon your preference, you can concentrate upon community service or public policy advocacy. Or a combination. There's plenty to do. Your participation is needed and should be welcomed.

REAFFIRMATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Let us reaffirm that every citizen in a democracy has a responsibility to answer the call to some form of participation in civic and political life.

To those of who entered the political arena for the first time in 1992, I say, "Welcome. Please stay involved." To those who stuck with your party, I say, "Good for you. We need dedicated party loyalists in American democracy."

To those who remain on the sidelines of the political arena, preferring to confine your civic life to nonpolitical activities, I say, "That's fine. We need dedicated civic workers. But won't you also consider getting more involved in politics?" To those who are so apathetic, alienated, or too busy to get involved in either politics or civic action, I plead, "Won't you lend a hand? We need your help to make this country achieve its full potential."

Full participation by the citizenry is the lifeblood of American democracy. All of us are called to be civic and political activists so that together we can keep our nation strong and vital.

Let us celebrate together the many ways we make our governments work effectively by practicing continuous, interactive consent of the governed. Let us work together to strengthen American democracy.

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November 10, 1992

PART TWO. MAKING THE MOST OF ELECTIONS

Chapter 3. You Can't Beat Somebody with Nobody

In American democracy free elections are at the center of attaining the consent of the governed. Through elections we choose who shall govern. We relate to them through other processes, but our right to elect and to reelect or turn out incumbents is fundamental.

According to the latest count there are 497,155 popularly elected officials in the United States.¹ Two thirds of them -- 330,400 -- are members of governing boards of counties, municipalities, townships, school districts, and special districts. There are 7,461 state legislators and 535 members of Congress.

Other elected boards account for another 41,072. Individually elected officials total 118,121, including the president and vice president of the United States, 50 governors, __ lieutenant governors, __ county executives, ____ mayors, __ state and local judges, and numerous other executive officers of state and local government.

These elected officials are the pride of American democracy. They go through often arduous political campaigns. They oversee and operate the 83,235 governmental units in the United States. Even those elected to part-time positions serve long hours. Most of them are readily available to their constituents, who are more likely to bring complaints than offer praise. We should deeply appreciate their dedication, for their work is at the heart of our representative democracy.

Nevertheless, because the nation is confronted with some grave problems that we haven't yet solved, some citizens have placed the blame on long-time incumbents in Congress and the state legislatures. Their remedy is to displace them by limiting how long they may serve. And so the term-limit movement has arisen.

It's a wrongful remedy. It's like cutting off an arm with a meat-axe to get rid of an itch. Worst of all, it goes against sovereignty of the people by restricting the choice of voters in each district to elect their own representatives and to reelect them as long as they like. (More on the term-limit fallacy in a later chapter.)

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Popularly Elected Officials" *1987 Census of Governments, Government Organization*, vol. 1, no. 2. p. 1. Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, January 1990.

For persons dissatisfied with present officeholders, a better way to achieve change is through the electoral process that graces American democracy with regularity. This can produce results much quicker because most term-limit measures won't take effect for six to twelve years. The 1992 election offers splendid evidence, for 110 new members were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, 25 percent of its total membership.

Those who want to defeat incumbents up for reelection should heed the old political adage, "You can't be somebody with nobody."

The same holds true for open seats in Congress, state legislatures, and other elective offices that are available because of death, resignation, retirement, or term limits where they apply. If you don't care for potential candidates interested in these open seats, remember that "you can't be somebody with nobody."

Find a candidate you can support, or run yourself. Enter the rough-and-tumble of politics. Compete. This is the true spirit of American democracy. It's harder but is far superior to arbitrarily impeding voter choice, the lazy and anti-democratic approach of term-limit advocates.

Election Cycle

Elections in American democracy are cyclical. Election day is the final event of many months of activity.

We can envision the electoral process in various jurisdictions taking place on slowly revolving stages, or some might say, on merry-go-rounds. The stages revolve at different speeds. Some complete the cycle in a year. Some take two, four, and six years to revolve.

A cycle is completed the day that voters step on stage to cast their vote in the general election. They may have also been on stage on primary election day. The day after the general election the election cycle starts another round.

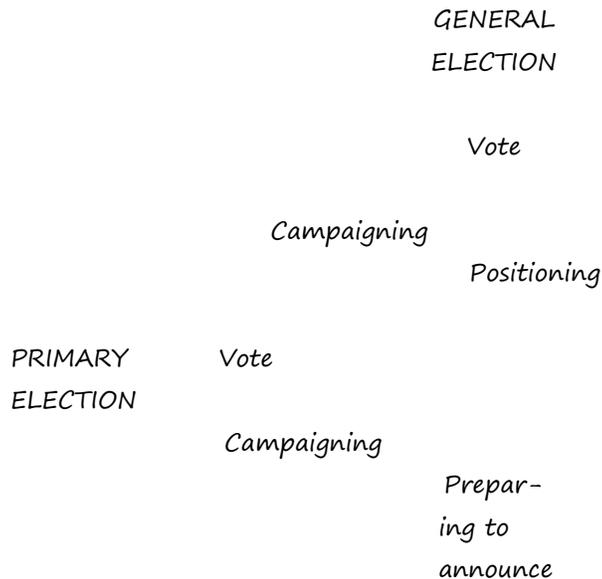
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Getting on Stage

How do candidates get on stage? What do they do once they're involved? What's the timing of various activities? If you want to become a candidate yourself, how do you make your entrée?

These days in American politics most aspirants for public office are *self-selected*. They make their own personal decision to run. Their motives are as complex and as varied as human nature, combining a quest for self-interest and a concern for others. They are self-seekers but also perceive themselves as public servants. In preparation for running, they often make a careful effort to *position* themselves well ahead of the formal nominating process.

There are, however, instances in which a *selection committee* from a political party, a caucus within a party, or an outside advocacy organization will *screen* candidates for elective office. They look at persons who are already positioning themselves to run, but on occasion they will reach out to *recruit* and *groom* certain individuals for the next election, or the one thereafter.

In rare instances a committee of citizens might call upon an established community leader and convince her or him to step out of private life into the political arena. But a true *draft* of a previously uninterested person is quite unusual, although the appearance of drafting is sometimes staged.

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Amateurs or Career Politicians?

The majority of the 497,155 popularly elected officials serve part-time. Some officeholder serve only one or two terms while others stick around for longer periods of service. Many make careers of full-time positions.

Some elected officials move through a series of offices. For instance, Jimmy Carter was a county school board member (1955-62) and a state senator (1963-67) while engaged in the peanut business, then governor of Georgia (1971-75) before becoming president of the United States (1977-81). Ronald Reagan, after many years on the speakers circuit for conservative causes, served as governor California (1967-74), ran unsuccessfully for the presidency in 1976, won election four years later, and served in the White House for eight years (1981-89).

George Bush ended a business career in the Texas oil industry in 196_ when he was elected to Congress, two years later lost an election to become a U.S. Senator, then served as [positions and dates to be added], became Ronald Reagan's vice president (1981-89), and then became president (1989-93). Bill Clinton lost an election to become a U.S. representative in 1974, became attorney general of Arkansas (1977-78), served one term as governor (1979-80), was defeated for reelection in 1980, took over as governor again (1983-92), and then was elected president of the United States (1993-).

Most members of Congress previously held state or local elective office. Of the 110 new representatives elected in 1992, _ previously served in elective positions in state and local government and another _ had appointive positions. _ members of the U.S. Senate were previously members of the House of Representatives, and _ were governors. Typically mayors and county executives have previously served on the city or county council.

Although some persons disparage career politicians, American democracy is well-served by the system that provides initial experience in elective office near to home and then broadens to wider

arenas. We're better off by this kind of career development than relying on a lot of raw amateurs placed in high office without understanding the issues and the political process.

It is a method widely and successfully used in other endeavors. For instance, among the members of baseball's Hall of Fame, only pitcher Bob Feller started his professional career on a major league team. All others of these greatest players had minor league experience [needs further checking]. In business corporations chief executive officers work their way to the top, except for company founders. When the founders want to groom their sons and daughters to succeed them, they assign them a variety of jobs: on the production line, in sales, in lower and middle management.

Learning through practical experience in entry positions prepares individuals for more challenging assignments in sports, business, and public office.

Selection Committees

In earlier periods in American politics, selection of nominees by a small group within the party (regulars or opposition) was more common than it is today. For instance, in 1946 a group of conservative Republicans in the 12th Congressional District of California was seeking a candidate to run against the liberal incumbent, Democrat Jerry Voorhis. They ran an ad in the newspaper but didn't favor any who applied. They asked Dr. Walker Drexler, former president of Whittier College to run. He declined but suggested a Whittier graduate, who was a superb debater: Richard Nixon, at the time living in Maryland and completing a term of service in the U.S. Navy. They contacted Nixon. He readily accepted and began his political career by defeating Voorhis.²

In 1948 in Michigan's 5th Congressional District a group calling themselves the Home Front Republicans wanted to challenge the Republican incumbent, an ally of the state Republican "boss" they were fighting. In a district where about half the voters were Dutch, they wanted someone who was or looked Dutch. With that in mind they recruited Gerald Ford, a young lawyer and Navy veteran, well known in those parts as a football star at the University of Michigan. He defeated the incumbent in the Republican primary and was in his 13th term in Congress when President Nixon appointed him vice-president to replace Spiro Agnew, who had resigned under pressure.³

[Add a Democratic example]

Outright recruitment still occurs these days in districts where no candidates are forthcoming

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to challenge a seemingly entrenched incumbent. And sometimes a state or national party unit will work with local and state party members to find a strong candidate to take on a presumed vulnerable incumbent of the other party. But more typically selection committees, where they function, perceive their task as screening persons who have indicated their interest in running and endorsing one of them.

Such a selection committee might be set up by political party officials or by a faction within the party opposed to party leadership. It might be a committee from a caucus that brings together African Americans, Hispanics, women, or other population groups. Sometimes it is a gathering of representatives of several such groups. It can also be a committee from an interest group (labor, business) or an ideological group (such as conservatives, Christian fundamentalists, moderates, liberals, libertarians) that functions outside the party organization.

Whatever its political orientation, the selection committee seeks a consensus on which candidate to back in the primary election or convention. The intent is to avoid dividing the vote of party regulars or caucus members, thereby allowing a candidate with a different orientation to prevail.

The selection committee is likely to discover that some persons have already announced their candidacy. Others are still in the positioning phase but pass the word through party or caucus connections that they are interested. The selection committee might interview them, talk to others about them, and decide which candidate to endorse in the primary election or at the convention. Now and then the selection committee will be dissatisfied with all announced candidates and will reach out to recruit someone else.

This process may not eliminate other candidates, for some persons are determined to run with or without party or caucus endorsement. But it is an effort to narrow the field and enhance the chances of the party's or caucus's favorite candidate.

Reform groups and newly formed caucuses which want to defeat an incumbent or to win an open seat will find that their chance is increased by agreeing upon a candidate who seems to have the best chance of winning and by discouraging other candidates of similar persuasion from dividing the vote.

This need not be a contemporary version of the discredited "smoked-filled room" (the back room out of public view where party bosses picked candidates). A selection committee can be democratically selected within the caucus or reform group. It can have open proceedings (and these sessions are likely to permit no smoking!). It can report back to a larger body for affirmation. Furthermore, this is only an early phase of the electoral process. Ultimately voters will decide in the primary and general elections.

Nowadays selection committees, where they function at all, usually don't have to beat the bushes to produce candidates. They are already out there in the open field, or at the edge deciding upon the best time to emerge. They are persons who have carefully positioned themselves to seek public office, or who have recently decided to run for public office. How this occurs is the subject of the next chapter.

November 10, 1992

PART TWO. MAKING THE MOST OF ELECTIONS

Chapter 3. You Can't Beat Somebody with Nobody

In American democracy free elections are at the center of attaining the consent of the governed. Through elections we choose who shall govern. We relate to them through other processes, but our right to elect and to reelect or turn out incumbents is fundamental.

According to the latest count there are 497,155 popularly elected officials in the United States.¹ Two thirds of them -- 330,400 -- are members of governing boards of counties, municipalities, townships, school districts, and special districts. There are 7,461 state legislators and 535 members of Congress.

Other elected boards account for another 41,072. Elected executive officials total _____, including the president and vice president of the United States, 50 governors, __ lieutenant governors, __ county executives, ____ mayors, and numerous other executive officers of state and local government. And there are __ state and local elected judges.

These elected officials are the pride of American democracy. They go through often arduous political campaigns. They oversee and operate the 83,235 governmental units in the United States.

Even those elected to part-time positions serve long hours. Most of them are readily available to

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Popularly Elected Officials" *1987 Census of Governments, Government Organization*, vol. 1, no. 2. p. 1. Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, January 1990. To be updated when a similar report from the 1992 Census of Governments becomes available.

their constituents, who are more likely to bring complaints than offer praise. We should deeply appreciate their dedication, for their work is at the heart of our representative democracy.

Nevertheless, because the nation is confronted with some grave problems that we haven't yet solved, some citizens have placed the blame on long-time incumbents in Congress and the state legislatures. Their remedy is to displace them by limiting how long they may serve. And so the term-limit movement has arisen.

It's a wrongful remedy. It's like cutting off an arm with a meat-axe to get rid of an itch. Worst of all, it goes against sovereignty of the people by restricting the choice of voters in each district to elect their own representatives and to reelect them as long as they like. (More on the term-limit fallacy in chapter 11.)

For persons dissatisfied with present officeholders, a better way to achieve change is through the electoral process that graces American democracy with regularity. This can produce results much quicker because most term-limit measures won't take effect for six to twelve years. The 1992 election offers splendid evidence, for 110 new members were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, 25 percent of its total membership.

Those who want to defeat incumbents up for reelection should heed the old political adage, "You can't be somebody with nobody."

The same holds true for open seats in Congress, state legislatures, and other elective offices that are available because of death, resignation, retirement, or term limits where they apply. If you don't care for potential candidates interested in these open seats, remember that "you can't be

somebody with nobody."

Find a candidate you can support, or run yourself. Enter the rough-and-tumble of politics. Compete. This is the true spirit of American democracy. It's harder but is far superior to arbitrarily impeding voter choice, the lazy and anti-democratic approach of term-limit advocates.

Election Cycle

Elections in American democracy are cyclical. Election day is the final event of many months of activity.

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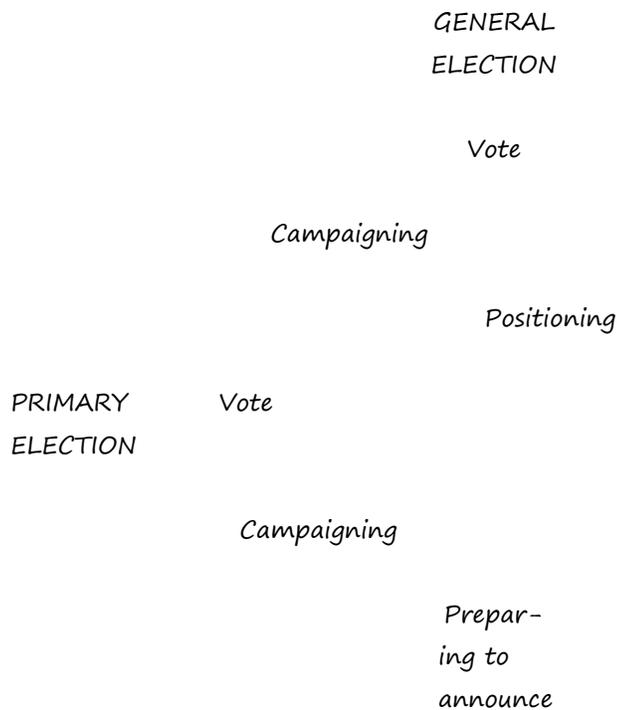
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George Bush, represented a Texas district for two terms in the House of Representatives (1967-71), lost an election to the U.S. Senate, then served as ambassador to the United Nations (1971-72), chairman of the Republican National Committee, ambassador to China (1974-75), and director of the Central Intelligence Agency (1976-77). He became Ronald Reagan's vice president (1981-89) and then president (1989-93).

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December 8, 1993

Chapter 4. Positioning

Some persons suddenly get an urge to run for elective office and plunge right in. Most candidates, however, go through a positioning process in preparation for running. For many this is quite purposeful. Others come to realize that their involvement in various community activities for its own sake has prepared them for the quest for elective office. The plungers, too, usually have a background in civic or business activities that provide pertinent experience for their candidacy.

Commonality

Positioning occurs not only in the quest for public office but also in other arenas where elections take place.

Potential candidates position themselves for election to class offices and student council in high school and college; as officers of service clubs, women's organizations, lodges, veterans organizations, and professional associations; in civic associations and cause-oriented organizations. The practice also occurs in religious denominations which elect bishops and other top officers. There you can observe persons positioning themselves years in advance and then becoming engaged in informal and formal campaigning as election time approaches.

To be sure in all of these arenas, persons are sometimes sought out to become candidates for positions they haven't pursued or are nominated without their consent. These are exceptions, often quite valuable ones, but the general practice of positioning prevails.

Entering the Political Arena

Persons seeking public office for the first time can learn a lot from successful politicians about positioning. Their experience indicates that you position yourself by joining organizations, doing things, making friends, forming alliances, seeking publicity, and gaining recognition.

Practices vary among types of political systems. Thus, where one party is overwhelming dominant and is tightly-controlled by a party boss or a small group of leaders, a potential candidate either has to gain their approval or mount a vigorous opposition campaign within the party. But where the party has several competing factions or caucuses, potential candidates can seek a favorable position with one of them, or if possible, gain the backing of two or more factions. Where two vigorous parties compete for the independent vote, candidates can benefit from developing a wide base of support beyond party regulars in order to show potentially broad appeal in the general election.

Geographic spread is another factor. It ranges from the intimate setting of ward and local council district to the entire state for gubernatorial and U.S. senatorial candidates (and the whole nation for the presidency). The closer to home the more personalized positioning is while in the wider arena the positioner gives more attention to influential political leaders and organizations representing major blocs of voters.

Name recognition. Some persons start with the benefit of name recognition, derived from athletics, television, business achievement, or prominent family. For example, U.S. Senator Bill Bradley from New Jersey was a basketball star at Princeton and with the New York Knicks. Representative Fred Grandy of Iowa was known through the television series, "Love Boat". Former Governor George Romney of Michigan was president of American Motors Company. In Massachusetts members of the Kennedy family have had an advantage because of their name. The same phenomenon occurs in local elections.

Although name recognition opens doors, it doesn't automatically get you through the passageway to nomination. You still have to build support and work hard to win. Thus, Senator Bradley was active in the New Jersey Democratic Party while he was playing for the Knicks. After Fred Grandy graduated from college, he was an aide to an Iowa congressman before embarking on a theatrical career. He reentered the political scene in Iowa by learning farm issues and intensive campaigning. Governor Romney participated in the Michigan Republican Party prior to running for elective office. A succession of Kennedys -- Jack, Ted, Joe (as their constituents called them) -- went door-to-door and spoke at countless gatherings. They paid their dues.

Getting known. Even if you lack immediate name recognition, you can develop a favorable reputation in the district where you want to run. If you are trying to build support within a party, caucus, or advocacy organization, you can take on tasks that many volunteers undertake, such as stuffing envelopes, handing out leaflets, making phone calls, attending rallies to add to crowd size. You can join committees to work on issues and plan tactics. You can serve on the staff of an elected official. To become better known, you can go out as a speaker, write letters to the editor, place phone calls to talk-in programs and appear on one yourself as you gain some publicity.

You can go beyond party and caucus by initiating civic endeavors, such as collecting food and clothing for the needy, organizing neighborhood cleanup, starting a mentor program for disadvantaged boys, forming a girls club. You can become active and take leadership roles in nonpolitical organizations, such as church or synagogue, parent teacher association, service club, women's civic group, veterans organization. Doing so provides contacts, offers visibility, and gives you experience in group dynamics and coalition building. The nonpartisan nature of many civic activities can be an asset because it shows you as a public-spirited citizen and not narrowly constricted to one party or a highly-vocal, single-purpose advocacy group.

Persons already holding elective office who want to move to a broader arena -- local to state, state to national -- use various techniques to position themselves to appeal to the broader constituency. They join statewide and national associations. They go outside their locality or state to participate in events where they meet persons from elsewhere and begin to achieve visibility. They serve on committees, speak at political conventions, and sometimes form or join caucuses of like-minded persons. They may support a candidate for a party post or an elective office with the hope that they will receive reciprocal support when they are ready to run for office in this broader domain.

Deciding When to Run

You may decide to undertake several years of positioning before you seek elective office for the first time. Or you may plunge right in without a lot of preliminary effort. In either case, there are a number of questions to ask yourself before deciding what office to run for and when to do so.

- What office do I want to seek? What are the district boundaries? (This may affect choice of residence.)
- Can I stand the heat of campaigning? The prospect of invasion of my privacy by the media? Attacks by opponents? Do I have the right temperament for competitive politics?
- Are there skeletons in my closet that the opposition will reveal?
- Do I want to commit the time required for campaigning and holding public office? (Even a part-time office demands a lot of time, and full-time positions may take 60 to 80 hours a week.)
- Can I afford to work for the salary? (Some salaries for elective officials may seem high, but there are a lot of hidden expenses.)
- How will it affect my family? Possible negative publicity? The long hours I will put in? The possible economic burden?
- Is there a succession of offices for reaching my goal? (Such as, school board then county council; member of city council then mayor; mayor or county executive then governor; state representative, next state senator, then governor; U.S. representative then senator and maybe president or vice president; or a succession of appointive positions before running for elective office.)
- When will there be an opening -- at the next election or a subsequent one? (Because of term limit, announced intent of incumbent not to seek reelection, prospect that he or she

will be running for another office.)

- *If the incumbent is likely to seek reelection, what are my prospects? If she or he is from the opposite party, can I win my party's nomination? If from my party, should I challenge the incumbent in the primary?*
- *Even if the incumbent seems assured of reelection, should I run to raise issues or to build initial support for a second try?*
- *Who can I get to support me? What individuals, caucuses, organizations?*
- *Who else is interested in running? What are their strengths and weaknesses, their support and public appeal? How do I compare?*
- *What opposition will I face from elements within my party or from advocacy organizations involved in electoral politics?*
- *Should I form a slate with candidates for parallel offices? (Such as with other legislative districts.)*
- *What are my chances of winning -- excellent, fair, poor? How can I improve my chance? (Sometimes you won't know until you try.)*

Thus, the positioning period is a time for self-analysis. If you contemplate running for elective office but discover enough negatives, you may decide not to stand for election now, and perhaps never. Or you may conclude that you have the desire to run and announce your candidacy.

Influencing Positioners

Because persons positioning themselves to seek elective officer are trying to establish a broad base of support, advocacy organizations many find this a good opportunity to promote their cause with the positioners.

If you a leader of an advocacy organization, look around and see who is getting ready to run for office: for the school board, city council, county council, mayor, county executive, state legislature, governor, Congress, president of the United States. Some of them will already hold policy position diametric to yours, so there's little point in talking with them. Others will be strongly supportive of your positions. Some will be unknown quantities or will be uncommitted. They are the ones particularly worth approaching.

You can educate them on your issues. Provide written information. If appropriate take them on site visits. Invite them to your meetings. You don't necessarily have to make a commitment to support them if they announce their candidacy. Among other reasons, you will want to see who else is running, who is most supportive of your cause, who is mostly likely to win.

At the same time positioners may want to avoid making firm promises to promote your cause. They are testing the water and are becoming aware of various cross-currents. Ultimately strong positions on particular issues will gain some votes and lose others. They may prefer to wait taking positions on very controversial issues. But you can still talk with them.

Even with these ambiguities, contacts by advocacy organizations with positioners is worthwhile. It can be the beginning of a relationship that will blossom later, or it can be a deadend. Not knowing which positioners will ultimately be elected, advocacy organizations can be in touch with a number of them.

Public Benefits

Individuals positioning themselves to run for political office are motivated by personal ambition and a desire for public service. Political party units, caucuses, and interest groups screen candidates and endorse one in hopes of winning. It's a competitive process that has public benefits.

As potential candidates position themselves, party leaders and other political activists observe them, note what they do and what they say, judge their accomplishments and their character, and consider whether they are appropriate candidates for public office. Unsuitable candidates to whom voters aren't likely to consent are screened out or encouraged to modify their positions and their mode of operation. Those who don't suffer defeat at the polls. Many strive but few are chosen.

Positioning functions as an early part of the consent of the governed. Prospective candidates, seeking recognition and staking out positions on public issues, interact with the public. Learning what the public thinks on particular issues, they may tailor their positions to reflect majority opinion. They may also educate the public on new ideas and learn how to advance unpopular views in a manner that will gain support. This exchange can have an effect on future policy decisions.

The positioning period is an opportunity for advocacy organizations to gain support for their positions from potential candidates before they have taken a public stand on particular issues. This kind of early involvement enables citizen activists to make advantageous connections that they can intensify when formal campaign begins. It lays the groundwork for future lobbying of those who are elected.

Incumbents positioning themselves for reelection keep in touch with constituents and track

public opinion (more on this in the next chapter). This influences the votes of legislators and the policy decisions of elected executives. Lobbyists offer election support to incumbents they favor. All of this is a manifestation of the interactive nature of the consent process, occurring continuously.

Accordingly, what happens on the revolving electoral stage during the period of positioning and other pre-campaign activities is as much a part of the consent of the governed as election day. Numerous public policy decisions are affected by the positioning process.

So even if you're not a candidate for election, give attention to those who are or who seem to have this ambition. Try to influence them in the early phase when their positions are fluid. All campaign commitments aren't observed, but many are. Thus, interaction with positioners and announced candidates is a worthy endeavor.

And don't forget, "you can't beat somebody with nobody!"

November 10, 1992

Chapter 4. Positioning

Some persons suddenly get an urge to run for elective office and plunge right in. Most candidates, however, go through a positioning process in preparation for running. For many this is quite purposeful. Others come to realize that their involvement in various community activities for its own sake has prepared them for the quest for elective office. The plungers, too, usually have a background in civic or business activities that provide pertinent experience for their candidacy.

Commonality

Positioning occurs not only in the quest for public office but also in other arenas where elections take place.

Potential candidates position themselves for election to class offices and student council in high school and college; as officers of service clubs, women's organizations, lodges, veterans organizations, and professional associations; in civic associations and cause-oriented organizations. The practice also occurs in religious denominations which elect bishops and other top officers. There you can observe persons positioning themselves years in advance and then becoming engaged in informal and formal campaigning as election time approaches.

To be sure in all of these arenas, persons are sometimes sought out to become candidates for positions they haven't pursued or are nominated without their consent. These are exceptions, often quite valuable ones, but the general practice of positioning prevails.

Entering the Political Arena

Persons seeking public office for the first time can learn a lot from successful politicians about

positioning. Their experience indicates that you position yourself by joining organizations, doing things, making friends, forming alliances, seeking publicity, and gaining recognition.

Practices vary among types of political systems. Thus, where one party is overwhelming dominant and is tightly-controlled by a party boss or a small group of leaders, a potential candidate either has to gain their approval or mount a vigorous opposition campaign within the party. But where the party has several competing factions or caucuses, potential candidates can seek a favorable position with one of them, or if possible, gain the backing of two or more factions. Where two vigorous parties compete for the independent vote, candidates can benefit from developing a wide base of support beyond party regulars in order to show potentially broad appeal in the general election.

Geographic spread is another factor. It ranges from the intimate setting of ward and local council district to the entire state for gubernatorial and U.S. senatorial candidates and the whole nation for the presidency. The closer to home the more personalized positioning is while in the wider arena the positioner gives more attention to influential political leaders and organizations representing major blocs of voters.

Name recognition. Some persons start with the benefit of name recognition, derived from athletics, television, business achievement, or prominent family. For example, U.S. Senator Bill Bradley from New Jersey was a basketball star at Princeton and with the New York Knicks. Representative Fred Grandy of Iowa was known through the television series, "Love Boat". Former Governor George Romney of Michigan was president of American Motors Company. In Massachusetts

members of the Kennedy family have had an advantage because of their name. The same phenomenon occurs in local elections.

Although name recognition opens doors, it doesn't automatically get you through the passageway to nomination. You still have to build support and work hard to win. Thus, Senator Bradley was active in the New Jersey Democratic Party while he was playing for the Knicks. After Fred Grandy graduated from college, he was an aide to an Iowa congressman before embarking on a theatrical career. He reentered the political scene in Iowa by learning farm issues and intensive campaigning. Governor Romney participated in the Michigan Republican Party prior to running for elective office. A succession of Kennedys -- Jack, Ted, Joe (as their constituents called them) -- went door-to-door and spoke at countless gatherings. They paid their dues.

Getting known. Even if you lack immediate name recognition, you can develop a favorable reputation in the district where you want to run. If you are trying to build support within a party, caucus, or advocacy organization, you can take on tasks that many volunteers undertake, such as stuffing envelopes, handing out leaflets, making phone calls, attending rallies to add to crowd size. You can join committees to work on issues and plan tactics. You can serve on the staff of an elected official. To become better known, you can go out as a speaker, write letters to the editor, place phone calls to talk-in programs and appear on one yourself as you gain some publicity.

You can go beyond party and caucus by initiating civic endeavors, such as collecting food and clothing for the needy, organizing neighborhood cleanup, starting a mentor program for disadvantaged boys, forming a girls club. You can become active and take leadership roles in

nonpolitical organizations, such as church or synagogue, parent teacher association, service club, women's civic group, veterans organization. Doing so provides contacts, offers visibility, and gives you experience in group dynamics and coalition building. The nonpartisan nature of many civic activities can be an asset because it shows you as a public-spirited citizen and not narrowly constricted to one party or a highly-vocal, single-purpose advocacy group.

Persons already holding elective office who want to move to a broader arena -- local to state, state to national -- use various techniques to position themselves to appeal to the broader constituency. They join statewide and national associations. They go outside their locality or state to participate in events where they meet persons from elsewhere and begin to achieve visibility. They serve on committees, speak at political conventions, and sometimes form or join caucuses of like-minded persons. They may support a candidate for a party post or an elective office with the hope that they will receive reciprocal support when they are ready to run for office in this broader domain.

Deciding When to Run

You may decide to undertake several years of positioning before you seek elective office for the first time. Or you may plunge right in without a lot of preliminary effort. In either case, there are a number of questions to ask yourself before deciding what office to run for and when to do so.

- What office do I want to seek? What are the district boundaries? (This may affect choice of residence.)
- Can I stand the heat of campaigning? The prospect of invasion of my privacy by the media? Attacks by opponents? Do I have the right temperament for competitive politics?

- *Are there skeletons in my closet that the opposition will reveal?*
- *Do I want to commit the time required for campaigning and holding public office? (Even a part-time office demands a lot of time, and full-time positions may take 60 to 80 hours a week.)*
- *Can I afford to work for the salary? (Some salaries for elective officials may seem high, but there are a lot of hidden expenses.)*
- *How will it affect my family? Possible negative publicity? The long hours I will put in? The possible economic burden?*
- *Is there a succession of offices for reaching my goal? (Such as, school board then county council; member of city council then mayor; mayor or county executive then governor; state representative, next state senator, then governor; U.S. representative then senator and maybe president or vice president; or a succession of appointive positions before running for elective office.)*
- *When will there be an opening -- at the next election or a subsequent one? (Because of term limit, announced intent of incumbent not to seek reelection, prospect that he or she will be running for another office.)*
- *If the incumbent is likely to seek reelection, what are my prospects? If she or he is from the opposite party, can I win my party's nomination? If from my party, should I challenge the incumbent in the primary?*
- *Even if the incumbent seems assured of reelection, should I run to raise issues or to build initial support for a second try?*
- *Who can I get to support me? What individuals, caucuses, organizations?*
- *Who else is interested in running? What are their strengths and weaknesses, their support and public appeal? How do I compare?*
- *What opposition will I face from elements within my party or from advocacy organizations involved in electoral politics?*
- *Should I form a slate with candidates for parallel offices? (Such as with other legislative districts.)*

- *What are my chances of winning -- excellent, fair, poor? How can I improve my chance? (Sometimes you won't know until you try.)*

Thus, the positioning period is a time for self-analysis. If you contemplate running for elective office but discover enough negatives, you may decide not to stand for election now, and perhaps never. Or you may conclude that you have the desire to run and announce your candidacy.

Influencing Positioners

Because persons positioning themselves to seek elective officer are trying to establish a broad base of support, advocacy organizations many find this a good opportunity to promote their cause with the positioners.

If you a leader of an advocacy organization, look around and see who is getting ready to run for office: for the school board, city council, county council, mayor, county executive, state legislature, governor, Congress, president of the United States. Some of them will already hold policy position diametric to yours, so there's little point in talking with them. Others will be strongly supportive of your positions. Some will be unknown quantities or will be uncommitted. They are the ones particularly worth approaching.

You can educate them on your issues. Provide written information. If appropriate, take them on site visits. Invite them to your meetings. You don't necessarily have to make a commitment to support them if they announce their candidacy. Among other reasons, you will want to see who else is running, who is most supportive of your cause, who is mostly likely to win.

At the same time positioners may want to avoid making firm promises to promote your cause. They are testing the water and are becoming aware of various cross-currents. Ultimately strong

positions on particular issues will gain some votes and lose others. They may prefer to wait taking positions on very controversial issues. But you can still talk with them.

Even with these ambiguities, contact by advocacy organizations with positioners is worthwhile. It can be the beginning of a relationship that will blossom later, or it can be a deadend. Not knowing which positioners will ultimately be elected, advocacy organizations can be in touch with a number of them.

Public Benefits

Individuals positioning themselves to run for political office are motivated by personal ambition and a desire for public service. Political party units, caucuses, and interest groups screen candidates and endorse one in hopes of winning. It's a competitive process that has public benefits.

As potential candidates position themselves, party leaders and other political activists observe them, note what they do and what they say, judge their accomplishments and their character, and consider whether they are appropriate candidates for public office. Unsuitable candidates to whom voters aren't likely to consent are screened out or encouraged to modify their positions and their mode of operation. Those who don't suffer defeat at the polls. Many strive but few are chosen.

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Incumbents positioning themselves for reelection keep in touch with constituents and track public opinion (more on this in the next chapter). This influences the votes of legislators and the policy decisions of elected executives. Lobbyists offer election support to incumbents they favor. All of this is a manifestation of the interactive nature of the consent process, occurring continuously.

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April 5, 1993

Chapter 5. Keeping Incumbents Alert

Based upon past experience, it is safe to predict that in the United States a majority of today's incumbents in elective office will seek reelection. Those who can't run for reelection because of term limits or who are retiring for other reasons are a minority.

This means that most incumbents have their eye on the next election while they are performing their present duties. They position themselves to run for reelection, and this influences their conduct in office. Although some persons might deplore this practice as being too political, in fact it is a desirable for American democracy because it enhances the accountability of elected officials. This is true for both legislative and executive officials.

LEGISLATORS

There are two ways of looking at members of legislative bodies in the United States: Congress, state legislatures, city and county councils, township boards. The first is what we citizens expect of our elected representatives. The second is how legislators act.

What Citizens Expect

As individual citizens we would prefer that our elected representatives vote on legislative matters as we would vote if we were a member of the legislative body. We realize that this won't always happen, but at least we expect them to reflect majority opinion in the district they represent. We certainly don't want them to be beholden to a political boss (unless, perhaps, we are an intimate part of the political machine) or to any special interest (unless it is ours).

Even if we voted for another candidate or even if we differ from our representative's stated position on an issue, we want her or him to give consideration to our viewpoint, to read our letters, to meet with us upon request.

We want our representative to keep us informed about legislative issues, to attend meetings in the district, to participate in local events. We expect her or him to meet with reporters and appear on radio and television talk shows so that their views on policy issues are publicized.

We want our representative to work on matters that help our district. We want her or him to assist us in our dealings with government. Sometimes we do this after frustrating experience with the bureaucracy, knowing that our representative may have some clout. At other times we don't know where else to turn to solve some problem. Although we are aware of broader concerns that our representative must deal with, we feel that we need someone to look after our specific needs and interests in the course of legislation and program administration.

How Legislators Act

Members of Congress, state legislators, city and county council members deal with their constituents in a variety of ways. Members of Congress, using printing allocations and free postage of their mailing frank, regularly send out newsletters to every household in their district or state. Commonly the first issue each year contains a questionnaire on important matters that will come up during the legislative session, and constituents are asked to reply. State legislators and local council members, lacking the frank, tend to send out fewer newsletters, but they find other ways to communicate with people in their district.

Legislators at all levels of government regularly send news releases to newspapers, radio and television stations serving their district. They hold news conferences within the district.

The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate maintain television and radio studios so that members can make live or taped broadcast to local stations. They send out radio "actualities" -- taped statements that are transmitted via telephone lines to local radio stations for insertion into news programs. They use satellite linkage to transmit videotaped statements or excerpts from floor speeches and committee testimony. Sometimes through these linkages they grant live interviews to local TV reporters.

Although state legislatures and local councils rarely have their own radio and television production facilities, their members constantly seek opportunities to be heard and seen on broadcast media. They make themselves available to television reporters and are usually quite willing to appear on call-in talk shows. Because the listening and viewing audience of many radio and television stations encompass a number of state legislative and local council districts, legislators and council members compete among themselves for access. To get attention they sometimes create newsworthy events.

Legislators at all levels assign staff to handle constituency response and service. All mail is read by staff and usually tabulated by issue and opinion. Local council members and state legislators are likely to read all their mail. Some U.S. representatives do, too, but for many and for most U.S. senators the volume is too heavy for them to read every letter. Instead they receive a summary prepared by staff and read a sample, including correspondence from key supporters, state and local officials, and other influential citizens.

For the most part legislators answer their mail, except for postcards arriving in mass. Sometimes their reply is quite general: "Thank you for your letter. I always like to hear from my constituents." Etc. But often the response is tailored to the issue addressed, for the advent of computers has made it possible to easily combine stock paragraphs into a seemingly personal letter. The response is likely to be more specific when the legislator shares the constituent's viewpoint and is

fuzzier when the legislator is in disagreement or uncommitted on the issue. Computers also permit legislative offices to build mailing lists of constituents interested in particular issues so that later they can be sent statements and reports on legislative votes.

Most legislative offices are organized to perform "case work", that is, to help constituents deal with the bureaucracy and other kinds of problems. Much of this is unrelated to particular legislation, although certain patterns may reveal problems with legislative remedies. In this sense legislators serve as ombudsmen, that is, troubleshooters and overseers of bureaucratic performance.

In Washington, D.C. the majority of staff time of a typical congressional office is spent on dealings with constituents rather than legislation (but committee staff is available on legislative matters). Moreover, U.S. representatives and senators have district and state offices that provide further linkages with constituents. Staffs of state legislators and local council members devote a lot of time to constituent service.

On legislative issues most members of Congress, state legislators, and local council members keep careful track of opinion in the district they represent. They have previously taken stands on particular issues during the election campaign, and they have the position of their political party to uphold. At the same time they are usually careful not to stray too far from what seems to be majority opinion on particular issues. Of if they do on some issues, they try to counterbalance this by sticking with prevalent district opinion on many other issues. They do this both out of respect for their responsibility to represent their district and because they want to be reelected. Even legislators who garnered 70 percent or more of the vote in the previous election are cautious about casting wrong votes that could cause a drastic turnaround in the next election.

In short, most of the things that legislators do are things we want them to do. Whether their motivation is solely a desire to stay in office or is derived from a genuine commitment to be a true representative, the result is constant interaction between legislators and their constituents.

Impact of Fundraising

There is one further activity that absorbs a lot of time of legislators beyond their legislative duties, particularly for members of Congress. It is fundraising for the next election campaign or for paying off debts from the last campaign. For many legislators this a heavy burden because the advent of television has made election campaigns much more expensive. This is especially true in states and congressional districts with multiple viewing areas.

Campaign finance records reveal that incumbents have a distinct advantage in raising funds from interest groups and individual contributors. This occurs because interest groups are concerned about legislative votes in the current session as well as in the future. They don't buy votes directly,

but they do achieve greater access to state their views and have them listened to.

The superior fundraising capacity of incumbents is one source of discontent that has led to the term limit movement. Term limit advocates deplore the fact that many local, state, and national legislators keep getting reelected. They attribute this to the unfair advantage that incumbents have in fundraising and, in the case of members of Congress, with the mailing frank. Not seeing a way to alter this advantage, those who want to displace incumbents who can't be defeated at the polls have turned to the term limit remedy.

As chapter 11 discusses in greater detail, term limits are anti-democratic because they restrict the choice of voters in each district to select their own representative. However, the concern for incumbent advantage in campaign fundraising is valid for two reasons. First, it tends to give moneyed interests an unfair advantage in gaining greater access to elected officials than the average citizen can achieve. Second, it absorbs a lot of time of legislators, thereby detracting them from the legislative duties. The best remedy is campaign finance reform, a subject we'll take up in chapter 9, not term limits.

Making Contact within the District

The natural desire of legislators to keep in touch with their constituents -- whether out of a desire to get reelected, a commitment to be a faithful representative, or a combination -- provides natural opportunities for citizens to initiate their own contacts with legislators. If incumbents are perpetually positioning themselves to run for reelection, then voters should position themselves to influence the incumbent positioners. If legislators constantly seek to know citizens' opinions, they citizens can systematically make their views known.

In the jet age most U.S. representatives return to their home district nearly every weekend or least two or three times a month. U.S. senators return to their home states with almost as much frequency. Both houses of Congress schedule light workloads on Mondays and Fridays most of the session to facilitate members' travel. They also have ten day recesses several times a year, called "district work period" by the House of Representatives. Similarly state legislators go home on weekends. City and council members are around all the time.

A legislator seeks visibility within the district. Therefore, she or he will attend various events, speak at service clubs, visit community facilities, attend church, go to wakes and funerals. Sometimes the legislator will be available at a district office at particular hours for anyone who wants to drop in, or will organize a series of town meetings to which anyone can come and speak.

Individuals and organizations with policy concerns can take advantage of the public appearance of legislators. They can be certain that their concerns are raised with the legislator and their views presented. Some organizations "birddog" legislators by getting different persons to go to various

appearances and raise the organization's key issues. Where an organization sets up a town meeting rather than the legislator, it can control the agenda and be certain that the legislator deals with all of its concerns. Sometimes coalitions set up meetings in which representatives of member organizations have an opportunity to state their positions and ask the legislator to respond.

When a legislator is appearing on a radio or television call-in show, individuals can call in their questions. Organizations can alert members so that they can place calls.

Advocacy organizations desiring to reach legislators in these ways will need to know the legislative schedule of recesses and the legislators' itinerary during visits to the home district. Although there may be some groups a legislator would prefer to avoid, most legislators are willing to be widely accessible on these occasions.

To influence legislators on specific legislation, there are variety of lobbying techniques that we'll consider in chapters 15 and 16. Advocacy organizations can use these techniques to influence specific legislative votes. In lobbying may be useful to let the legislator know that the organization is following her or his voting record and will be publicizing it during the next election campaign. This reflects an understanding that throughout the legislative session, the legislator is positioning herself or himself for reelection. Strong citizen advocacy can influence the position she or he takes.

EXECUTIVE OFFICIALS

Like legislators, mayors, county executives, governors, the president of the United States, and other elected executive officials often want to be reelected if they are eligible for another term. (Historically term limits have been more common for chief executives than legislators). So they position themselves for reelection as they go about their duties.

Usually an elected chief executive has a distinct advantage over legislators in gaining publicity. A city has only one mayor, a state only one governor, the nation only one president whereas city councils, state legislatures, and Congress have many members. The same pattern prevails in counties with an elected executive and county council, compared to the older pattern of a board of county commissioners. In these situations the chief executive is a central focus of media attention while legislative leadership is much more spread out. Moreover, the executive process is more action-oriented than the deliberative processes of legislative bodies, and this generates greater publicity.

Even so elected chief executives do many of the same things legislators do to communicate with their constituents and stay in touch with them: issue news releases, hold press conferences, grant interviews to print and broadcast journalists, appear on radio and television shows, speak at community meetings and conventions, appear at public events, attend funerals. In addition, the

chief executive can call upon a host of appointed officials to perform similar outreach. In the process they are in touch with a variety of group constituencies, who are told how the chief executive shares their concerns.

Citizens who want to influence chief executives can take advantage of these opportunities: invite them to meetings, catch them when they are making public appearances, call in when they are on radio and television shows. When cabinet members and department heads appear instead of the chief executive, citizens can send messages to the executive through them.

Lobbying executive officials is different than lobbying legislators, for executive policy-making processes are usually not as open and ordinarily don't follow a set procedure and timetable. There are no bills or proposed ordinance to study, support, oppose, or propose amendments. However, there are regularly occurring policy documents, especially the budget, and periodically the chief executive processes legislation. Vacancies in top appointive positions occur, and who gets the job affects future policy decisions in the particular department. So there are matters on which citizens can lobby chief executives.

This can occur whether or not the chief executive is seeking reelection. But if the mayor, county executive, governor, or president is positioning himself or herself for reelection, citizens can recognize the positioning process and take advantage of it in their efforts to influence executive policy decisions.

January 12, 1993

Chapter 6. Infusing Political Parties

Political parties are vital instruments of American democracy. Although some pundits describe their decline and possible demise, political parties are alive and flourishing today. They play important roles in achieving the consent of the governed. They provide numerous opportunities for citizens seeking greater political participation.

In the electoral process political parties provide the framework for nominating candidates and working for their election. In legislative bodies they are the basis for organizing majority control and opposition.

For many individuals the parties provide an outlet for political expression. For some persons they are an avenue for fulfilling ambition for public office. For others they are a means for promoting their causes. And, we must admit, some individuals and interest groups use political parties to secure economic gain.

To the extent that the Democratic and Republican parties bring together diversity under a "big tent", they are instruments of social cohesion. But where one or both of the major parties, and sometimes smaller parties, too, polarize the electorate into hostile segments, they can be a divisive influence.

For the most part political parties are remarkably open to citizens who take the effort to get involved. You don't have to have an invitation to participate, but you do need to know how political parties are organized, how they function, when and how best to get involved. With this kind of knowledge and a strong commitment you can help make the party of your choice a more effective instrument of democracy.

Party Identity and Affiliation

For most of the 200 year history of the American republic the electorate has divided into two major parties. But also smaller parties have formed, grown, sometimes lingered for many years, merged into one of the major parties, or faded away. Independent candidates have emerged, attracted support, and occasionally been elected. Nevertheless, two party dominance has remained, since 1860 the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, functioning as broad coalitions but offering enough differences to provide choice for voters.

Neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party is a cohesive monolith with a unified, top-down hierarchy. Rather they are both pluralistic endeavors composed of mostly autonomous local and state units which come together in a loose-knit, national federation. They are

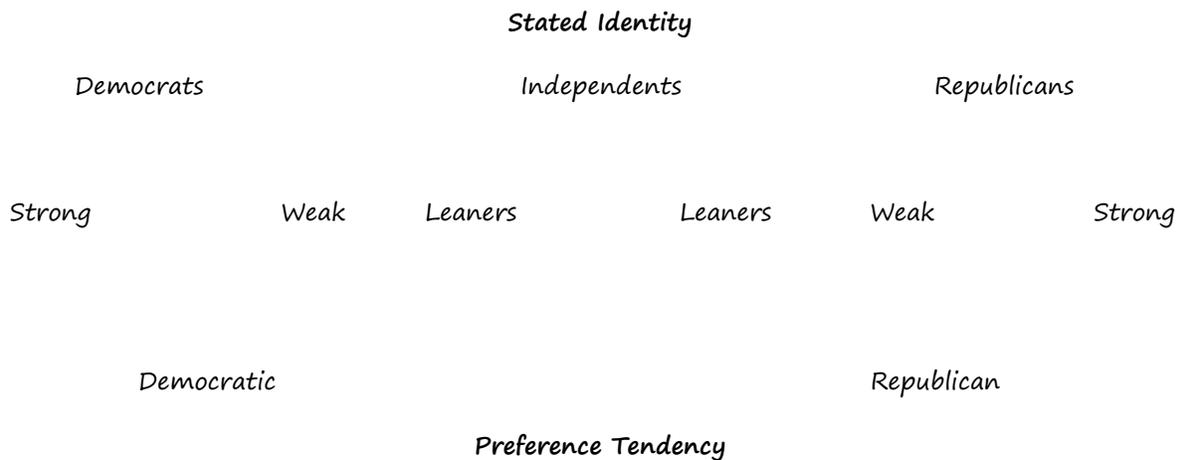
amalgamations that enable persons sharing common political values to work together in election campaigns and governance.

Neither party has formal membership requiring strict creedal adherence or payment of dues. Rather Democrats and Republicans range from persons who merely identify with the party label personally but do little to support the party to those who hold party positions and run for public office on the party ticket. At the core are party stalwarts, strong Democrats and strong Republicans, who usually vote the straight ticket. At the outer edge are weak Democrats and weak Republicans who are willing to split their ticket and vote for candidates from another party or independent candidates.

In addition to persons identifying with the two major parties, the American population contains independent voters and third party adherents. Some of the independents lean toward the Democratic Party and others to the Republican Party, but many are strictly independent without an inclination to either party.

Thus, political party identity in the United States is a spectrum ranging from strong Democrats at one end to strong Republicans at the other with staunch independents and third party members at the center, as shown in Figure 6-1.

Figure 6-1. Political Identity in the United States



The portion of the adult population falling into these categories varies over the years, but for the last six (?) decades Democratic preference has been highest. The Center..., which conducts regular surveys of party identity, found that the pattern in 199_ to be as shown in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1. Political Party Identity in the United States, 199_; by Percentage

| | | <i>Stated Identity</i> | | <i>Preference Tendency</i> |
|--------------------|----|----------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| Democrat | | | | |
| Strong | | xx | | |
| Weak | xx | xx | xx | Democratic |
| Independent | | | | |
| Leaning Democrat | | xx | | |
| No preference | xx | xx | xx | Strict Independent |
| Leaning Republican | | xx | | |
| Republican | | | | |
| Strong | | xx | xx | Republican |
| Weak | xx | xx | | |

Source:

In 26 states and the District of Columbia party identification gains concrete expression through voter registration with an indication of party affiliation. This allows individuals to vote in party primary elections. In another 12 states voters ask for a party primary ballot at the voting place; in __ of these states poll officials record the voters' party choice, but in __ states they don't. In 9 states primary voters receive separate ballots for each party, secretly choose one for voting, and discard the others. Two states have primary ballots containing candidates of all parties so that voters can mix their party preference. One state has a nonpartisan ballot for all state and local offices.¹

Thus, to the extent that the Democratic and Republican parties have members, it comes about through voter registration or by stating party preference at the primary polls. Seven out of eight Americans live in states where this occurs. Otherwise, there is no formal membership in the major parties. In some localities and states, however, elements within these two parties form clubs and caucuses with dues-paying members. In contrast, smaller political parties tend to have a more formalized membership.

Depth of Involvement

Persons who identify with the Democratic and Republican parties extend from those on the outer edge who claim party identity but don't even vote to an inner core of public officials elected as

¹ Epstein, p. 245. William J. Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in American*. Sixth Edition. Washington: CQ Press, 1991, pp. 90-91.

party nominees. In this sense party identity can be visualized as a set of circles within circles, as shown in Figure 6-2. These circles divide Democrats and Republicans into several bands, based upon depth of party involvement.

Figure 6-2. Involvement of Party Identifiers

Marginal involvement. The outermost portion of Band One contains persons who identify with the party but do little or nothing beyond voting. Sometimes they don't even vote. They are passive identifiers who oftentimes vote a split ticket at the polls. Where their party identity is known, as occurs in states where voter registration and primary voting reveals party affiliation, party workers can seek them out, encourage them to come to the polls and vote for the party ticket, and urge them to get involved in party activities.

Millions of identifiers do participate in politics to some extent. They almost always vote in the general election and often in competitive party primaries. They wear candidate buttons, display bumper stickers, put out yard signs, make financial contributions, attend coffees for candidates, go to rallies. Mostly they are active just before an election rather than year round. However, they form a pool of volunteers who candidates can recruit to work in their behalf prior to the primary election or nominating convention. They also serve as a reserve corps of persons who party officials can enlist in a variety of activities necessary to sustain the party.

Active volunteers. Band Two consists of party identifiers who devote time to work for the party or particular candidates. Party volunteers help with multiple tasks required to keep the organization going: answering phones, record keeping, fundraising, telephone polling, door-to-door canvassing, voter registration, holding coffees, organizing rallies, getting out the vote, and other campaign activities. Volunteers for candidates do many of the same things, but their loyalty is more toward their candidate than the party as a whole. A gradation occurs between candidate and party volunteers, for many of the former are drawn from the latter and are likely to work for the whole ticket in the general election.

Citizens who want to get more involved in the electoral process will find that volunteering for party or candidate support activities is an excellent place to start. Most campaign organizations welcome volunteers with open arms, though sometimes they use them poorly or show insufficient appreciation.

For persons who want to become a party officer or the party's candidate for a public office, volunteering is often the place to begin. You become known. You get the feel of politics and learn the lay of the land. You meet people who may become your supporters. You support other officeseekers this year with the hope that they will support you in future years.

Party Structure

Band Three contains persons holding party offices and serving as delegates to party conventions. Altogether the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States have approximately xxx,xxx positions of this sort. In structure the two parties are built from bottom-up, but some party operations have a top-down process.

Precinct offices. The base for both parties is the approximately 100,000 local voting precincts in the United States (called by different names around the country). Potentially each of them can have a party officer. [Describe how they are chosen, differing around the country.]

Precinct workers are the field force of the Democratic and Republican parties. They reach out to voters in their precinct, distribute campaign literature, collect funds, and get out the vote. In many states they also play a role in selecting members of local and state party committees and in choosing convention delegations. For that reason organizations with a particular political orientation, such as "left", "right", minority rights, encourage and assist their members to become precinct officers. Individuals looking for a career in politics can also start at this level. A 19__ survey found that __ percent of all precinct positions were filled, which meant that __ were vacant. Filling vacancies is therefore the place to begin, but as periodic elections are held for precinct offices, they can be contested.

Local committees. Local party committees are built upon the precinct foundation. The Democratic and Republican parties have committees in virtually all of the 3,042 counties in the United States and in a large number of cities, New England towns, and township with strong governmental powers.

Members of local party committees are chosen by [compete]

Local party committees are basically autonomous. They may offer a primary slate or let candidates compete and then support the winners in the general election. They are free to take positions on public issues and are not forced to follow a party line issued by the state committee or national committee. If local party officials don't like the candidates offered by their party's state or national unit, they usually sit on their hands rather than oppose them outright.

Where a state legislative district or a congressional district encompasses more than one local governmental jurisdiction, local party committees come together in the nominating process. In some states they hold nominating conventions to select the party's candidate. In other states the candidate is chosen in a primary election, and the aggregate of local committees supports her or him in the general election.

State committees. Local party committees are the building blocks of state committees. [how they are organized. do voters in some states vote for state party officers?]

Many state committees play a prominent role in selection of party nominees for state office: governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and other elected executive officers. In yesteryears party leaders in a number of states decided their party's nominee and got it ratified by the state convention or in the party primary election. This happens less frequently now because candidates usually come forth as self-starters, but sometimes party leaders have a hand in recruiting who they

think will be a strong candidate and issuing an endorsement. In __ states the state committee is responsible for organizing and conducting a nominating convention for state offices.

Like local committees, state party committees are autonomous and are not directed what to do by the national committee. However, during the past 20 years many state committees have received technical assistance and financial contributions from their national committee. They in turn have offered assistance to local party committees, such as computerized lists of registered voters, training for candidates, and sometimes financial donations.

National committee. The national committees of the Democratic and Republican parties are composed of persons chosen by state committees....[role of an incumbent in picking national chair]

The central task of the national committee is to organize and run the quadrennial national convention to nominate the party's candidate for president. As an extension of this responsibility, the national committee establishes rules for selection of delegates from the states, such as when state primaries may be held and the gender composition of delegates. Court rulings have affirmed the right of the national committee to adopt binding requirements that state party organizations must observe even if it means changing state laws.

The actual presidential nominating process is, however, decentralized. __ states hold primaries, __ states have conventions, __ rely on caucuses, and __ have a combination of these methods. In some states convention delegates are chosen by congressional districts while elsewhere there is a statewide slate. [check this]

The national convention selects the party's nominee for president and vice president and adopts a party platform. Since 1956 Republican and Democratic nominees for president have had the nomination sewn up before the convention opened, and therefore their representatives have had a strong influence on the platform but not unchecked control. The platform, though, is not legally binding on the party's presidential and vice-presidential candidate, on the party's representatives in Congress, or on state and local party committees.

Although national party committees cannot command state and local committees, they may get involved in state and local party affairs by making financial contributions to candidates, offering technical assistance and training to party officials and candidates, and in some instances helping to obtain a strong candidate to run for an open seat in Congress or against an incumbent of the other party.

Convention delegates. Precinct officials and members of local, state, and party committees serve for specific terms. Delegates to party conventions are chosen just for that event (though many hold other party positions). In 1992 the Democratic National Convention had ___ delegates, and

the Republican National Convention had _____. In one cycle of local and state nominating conventions for local and state office, approximately _____ persons serve as delegates.

Party members often seek election as a convention delegate in order to support a particular candidate or slate of candidates. The candidates themselves often decide who may run in their behalf for delegate positions.

Candidates and Elected Officials

Candidates. Band Four of the circle of circles describing the two major political parties is composed of candidates for public office. In previous chapters we have noted that most of them initiate their own quest for office rather than being sought out and slated by party committees or core leadership groups. They position themselves to run. Once in office they position themselves to achieve reelection. We'll look at how they campaign in the next chapter.

Elected officials. The inner circle of the Democratic and Republican parties holds public officials elected on the party ticket. It is a multinucleated circle, for elected officials are as varied as the party whose label they carry. Within one unit of government -- local, state, national -- legislators and the elected chief executive often form separate nuclei for party activities. So much so that political scientists speak of the "presidential party" and the "congressional party", with similar division in state and local arenas.

Legislative units. Political parties form the basis for organizing the U.S. Congress, the state legislatures except Nebraska which has a nonpartisan unicameral body, and many city and county councils. This occurs as persons from the same political party join together to choose legislative officers and work out a party agenda. Ordinarily the majority party chooses the presiding officer, except where the vice president or lieutenant governor presides over the senate. Committee chairs may be chosen by the legislative committees themselves with the majority party prevailing, by the party caucus, or by the party's elected leader (speaker of the house, majority leader of the senate, chair of city or county council). Party identity is also the basis for organizing the minority in legislative bodies.

By and large the legislative party is independent of the national, state, or local party committee and the elected chief executive, even if the latter is from the same party. Although they have the same party identity, these different units function as co-equals. Exceptions occur....[tight party structure]

Chief executive. It is customary for the president of the United States to be the dominant person in his (someday her) party. He chooses the national party chair, and the national committee works under guidance, sometimes tight control, of the White House. But even if the president is nominal party leader, he still must deal collegially with members of his party in Congress. When

they are from the same party, sometimes the relationship is cooperative, at other times prickly. When the president is of one party and Congress (or at least one its houses) is of the opposite party, party division is an important factor in executive-congressional relationships.

A similar pattern prevails in many states and in local governmental units with partisan elections. The governor, mayor, and county executive may dominate the party machinery, but party members in the state legislature, city and county council act independently. In some states, however, party organization is cohesive enough (perhaps descendent of an old-time machine) that the governor can play a more dominant role over the legislature. And in some localities the mayor or county executive can assert similar control. This happens most frequently where the chief executive has control of a sizable number of jobs and can use patronage as an instrument of dominance.

Conclusion

In recent years millions of Americans have expressed dissatisfaction with the Democratic and Republican parties and their candidates. As an outlet for their frustration, they have voted for Ross Perot, other independents, and third party candidates. This is quite appropriate, especially to send a message. Nonetheless, dissatisfied citizens may be able to achieve greater long-lasting results by infusing the two major political parties. After all, office holders affiliated with these parties hold most of the legislative and elected executive positions in the 38,984 general purpose governments in the United States [account for nonpartisan positions]. The parties nominate them and work for their election. While office holders in the American system are not bound to a party line on policy issues, a good deal of public policy development occurs in a party setting, especially in legislative bodies.

As we have seen, selection of party committees is bottom-up: party members choose precincts officials who select local committee members, local committees elect members of the state committee, state committees select members of the national committee. Also, individual legislators elect their party leaders within the legislative body. This same bottom-up process operates in selecting delegates to state and national nominating conventions.

This being the nature of the Democratic and Republican parties, citizens who want to get involved in party politics will find that their best entree is in their home locality. Organizations desiring to infuse political parties with their ideas and their people will do best with a grassroots strategy. From this base they will be able to influence who serves on state and national party committees, who will be delegates to nominating conventions, and the party platforms adopted there.

Political parties, renewed through grassroots infusion, can continue to play important roles as essential instruments of American democracy.

February 24, 1993

Individuals and Party Groupings

To grasp the pluralistic nature of the two major parties, we can start with individual citizens and work outward to local, state, and national party organizations.

Individuals. For most individuals born in the United States, orientation toward a particular political party commences in childhood, influenced primarily by family. This doesn't especially change through peer pressure during adolescence, for politics is scarcely a concern for most teenagers. Young adults as new voters may, however, reconsider their party identity, partly influenced by associates at work and college, but most don't change. Later persons experiencing economic or geographic mobility as their careers unfold may modify their political alignment. Policy positions and performance by elected officials and candidates of a particular political party may stimulate some persons to switch their identity toward or away from the party.

Thus, it is that orientation toward a particular party commences as an indicator of *political identity*.¹ Recent opinion polls reveal that __ percent of Americans over age 18 identify themselves as Democrats, __ percent as Republicans, and __ percent as independents or related to a minor party.² Depth of identity varies between party stalwarts who will almost always vote a straight ticket and others -- independent Democrats and independent Republicans -- who are willing to split their ticket by voting for some candidates of the other party. Moreover, among the __ percent who are independents, __ percent lean toward the Democratic Party, __ percent toward the Republican. In sum, __ percent of the population has some degree of orientation toward one of the two major parties, but less than half can be considered party stalwarts.

History

Political parties in the United States are almost as old as the American republic. Although

¹ Leon Epstein uses the term "party identifiers" to refer to "are primarily responders to candidates, officeholders, programs, issues, and policies, and organizational efforts" of political parties but are not party workers or formal members. (*Political Parties in the American Mold*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986. p. 240.)

² Source. The percentages change over the years, but the Democratic Party has outpolled the Republican Party in voter preference for many decades.

George Washington, our first president (and some of the other founders, too), preferred a nonpartisan approach to government, political parties were functioning before he completed his first term in office. They had been foreshadowed by debate in 1787 and 1788 between Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification process of the new Constitution.

These differences gained personification within Washington's first cabinet in the rivalry between Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton. In 1796 the Federalists rallied around John Adams to succeed Washington as president while Republicans supported Thomas Jefferson. By then a similar division had occurred among members of Congress. Politically active citizens with similar views and interests found it desirable to associate with one another and to work together to promote particular policies and get candidates they favored elected to office. So they formed parties.

Chapter 7. Campaigns to Accentuate the Positive...

[To be written. Will incorporate the following:]

Citizens should encourage all candidates to subscribe to fair campaign practices. One model comes from the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, as follows:¹

Code of Fair Campaign Practices

There are basic principles of decency, honesty, and fair play which every candidate for public office has a moral obligation to observe and uphold in order that, after a vigorously contested but fairly conducted campaign, our citizens may exercise their constitutional right to a free, untrammelled, and informed choice of those to whom they will entrust their welfare and that of the Nation. Public office is a public trust which may be undertaken only by those of unblemished character. Every candidate for public office is expected by the voters to adhere to the following basic understandings:

I SHALL conduct my campaign in the best American tradition, discussing the issues as I see them, presenting my record and policies with sincerity and frankness, and criticizing without fear and without malice the record and policies of my opponent and his party which merit such criticism.

I SHALL uphold the right of every qualified citizen to full and equal participation in the electoral process.

I SHALL condemn the use of personal vilification, character defamation, whispering campaigns, libel, slander, or scurrilous attacks on any candidate or his/her personal or family life.

I SHALL condemn the use of campaign material of any sort which distorts, misrepresents, or otherwise falsifies the facts regarding any candidate, as well as the use of malicious or unfounded accusations against any candidate which aim at creating or exploiting doubts as to his/her loyalty and patriotism.

I SHALL condemn any appeal to prejudice based on race, sex, creed, or national origin.

¹ *Copyright by Fair Campaign Practices Committee, Inc., Washington, D.C. Feminine gender added.*

I SHALL condemn any dishonest or unethical practice which tends to corrupt or undermine our American system of free elections or which hampers or prevents the full and free expression of the will of the voters.

I SHALL IMMEDIATELY AND PUBLICLY REPUDIATE support deriving from any individual or group which resorts, on behalf of my candidacy or in opposition to that of my opponent(s), to the methods and tactics which I condemn.

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added.

Chapter 8. ...And Eliminate the Negative

Negative campaigning has been on the rise in the United States since the 1980s. Rather than saying what they are for, candidates attack their opponent. They go beyond debate on policy issues and press untrue or distorted charges about the opponent's record in government. They and their henchmen put out information about the opponent's private life. Sometimes they smear his or her family.

At worst the negative campaigners play on popular racial, ethnic or religious prejudice in ways that increases intergroup conflict. Thus, "quotas" has become a tar-and-feather word. Other terms are used despairingly to divide, such as "radical feminists", "welfare cheaters", "ex-cons", and racial and ethnic innuendo that I shan't repeat. In this manner, some candidates are emphasizing the politics of fear rather than hope.

This is nothing new in American politics. Indeed, some past campaigns have been even nastier than what we've seen in recent years. But past practices don't make it right.

The best remedy is self-discipline by candidates. Just say no. You who are candidates can choose not to engage in this practice. You can decide that you won't partake in the politics of fear. You can conclude that getting elected is not worth the price of participating in divisive campaigning that is harmful to our democratic way of life. You can forbid all of your supporters from using smear tactics.

But if some candidates persist in negative campaigning, we citizens must find ways to end the practice. Candidates who are attack victims need constructive methods for rebuttal and mitigating the effect.

WHAT CITIZENS CAN DO

Citizens can press candidates to cease their negative campaigning. They can ask every candidate to agree to the Code of Fair Campaign Practices laid out in the previous chapter. They can publish and widely distribute lists of those who do and who don't subscribe to fair practices. They can establish review committees to monitor campaign advertising, speeches, video and radio presentations and then point out practices that violate the Code of Fair Campaign Practices.

Whenever a negative ad appears on television and radio and in newspapers, citizens can write the candidate in protest. Such letters will be most influential when they come from the candidate's supporters or supposed constituency, but anyone can write. Here are some samples, based upon ads

and practices of recent campaigns:

Dear Senator:

I saw your ad on television tonight where a pair of white hands were crumpling a job rejection letter. The narrator implied that the job went unfairly to a black person and that your opponent favors taking jobs from deserving whites and giving them to underserving blacks.

Your appeal is racism, pure simple. As one who has voted for you twice previously because you want to cut the federal deficit, I deplore this racist approach. I urge you to cease this kind of negative campaigning and to focus on really important issues, such as getting more jobs for everybody in our state.

Yours truly,
Charlotte Piedmont

Dear Mr. President:

As a life-long Republican, I'm appalled at your TV ad suggesting that our opponent willingly lets black murderers out of prison so that they can rape white women. You and I both know that it's not true. This appeal to racist fears should have no place in the party of Abraham Lincoln.

With best regards,
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Dear Governor:

Your TV ad indicating that your opponent will severely cut social security benefits has my 80-year old aunt very upset. Her only income comes from social security, so her fears are easily aroused. However, the Republicans support a strong social security system as much as we Democrats. So please stop causing the old folks needless anxiety.

Sincerely,
Willie Franklin

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I'm greatly disturbed that the national committee of our party has hired private investi-

gators to inquire into the personal lives and finances of the relatives of our opponent. As a major contributor, I'm deeply disturbed that my money is going for this purpose. Families of politicians have a right to privacy, just like the rest of us.

I realize that the opposition is bringing up matters in the private life of our candidate. But because it is done to us doesn't make it right. That's insufficient justification for using the same methods in dealing with our opponent. Somebody's got to put a stop to this unsavory practice. So please call off your investigators.

With best regards,
Judith Post

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the TV commentators pointed out, an entire evening at our party's national convention was devoted to "defining the opponent". It was all negative, and a lot of it was grossly exaggerated. That's terrible. A waste of time and money. At a time when the nation is crying for leadership we should have used this exposure on national television to offer a positive vision for America.

Maybe your expert political consultants think we can pick up votes by going negative, but I for one believe we should emphasize the positive. And I'm surprised that our candidate, who seems to be a decent person, would permit a "garbage" evening at the convention.

Sincerely yours,
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(Mrs. Richard R.)

Many politicians will continue negative campaigning as long as they believe it picks up more vote than it loses. We need to let them know that we find this style repulsive. We need to insist that they accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

WHAT CANDIDATES CAN DO

If you're a candidate and your opponent launches a negative campaign against you, there are ways to respond without stooping to a negative counterattack. Humor may be the best response.

For example, in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate in Wisconsin in 1992 the two candidates perceived as frontrunners levied a barrage of negative attacks on each other. The third candidate, Russ Feingold, considered an underdog, gained from this and rose in opinion poll ranking.

To take advantage of public revulsion of mudslinging and to avoid being a victim, he ran a TV ad that [to be completed]. He won the nomination and was elected to the Senate.

[Add other examples. Perhaps with pictures.]

When my older daughter was in first grade, she learned an effective way to counter name-calling that seems to be a routine part of child culture. A TV ad could be based upon her technique, as follows:

Scene one. Two six-year old boys (or girls) in a schoolyard.

First boy: You're a stinkeroo and a mealy-mouth mushhead!

Second boy: Ha! I'm rubber, you're glue. The bad things you say about me bounce off and stick on you!

Scene two. The two candidates in cartoon style.

Your opponent: [Accusing you of something.]

Key words appear on screen, such as "quotas", "tax and spend".

You: I'm rubber, you're glue. The bad things you say about me bounce off and stick on you.

The key words bounce off you and stick on him/her.

Narrator: [Citing some action or speech by your opponent or his/her appointees that do what he/she has accused you of, such as preferential hiring or tax increases.]

Another TV ad might feature you, the candidate, in an informal setting, speaking in conversational tone:

Candidate: My friends, you have been hearing my opponent and his supporters say all kinds of bad things about me. But for some strange reason, he [she] never wants to talk about the problems that concern you most, such as [unemployment, environmental hazards, etc.].

It reminds me of a preacher who wrote his gestures on the margin of his

sermon. At one point, it said, "Look up at Heaven." [Look up with raised arms] At another place, "Point in scorn." [Point finger at camera] Toward the end of the sermon, the note said, "Argument weak here. Yell loudly."

That's the way with my opponent. He's [she's] weak on the issues so he [she] tries to distract you the voter with loud accusations about me and my family. I know you're too smart to be fooled by this diversion from matters that really concern you. So I suggest that you call or write him [her] and ask him [her] to stick with important issues.

Thereafter on the stump, the candidate could mention the latest attack by his or her opponent and say, "It reminds me of the preacher..." and the audience would immediately get the point and laugh without the candidate completing story.

Ingenious campaign media specialists can come up with many other humorous ways to counter negative campaign advertising.

If as a candidate you are debating an opponent who is very abusive, you can tell the preacher story, or you can use a method suggested by Buddha.

[To audience] Friends, you have heard my opponent unleash a scurrilous attack against me. You may wonder how I'm going to respond. I simply want to ask him [her] a question.

[Turning to opponent] (Name), if you offer me a gift and I don't accept it, to whom does the gift belong? Obviously the gift still belongs to you. Likewise with your abuse. I don't accept it. You may keep it for yourself.

And if your audience is appreciative of a more earthy approach, you can add:

[To audience] Let me put in another way. It's like spitting into the wind. The spittle blows right back into your own face.

[To opponent] That's way it is with your abusive words. People in this state who insist upon fairness and friendly debate will blow your abuse right back on you. [Pulling out a handkerchief] And to show you that I have no ill-feelings, I offer you my handkerchief to wipe it off.

A Hebrew proverb¹ teaches:

*A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Then it adds:

*The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge,
but the mouth of fools pour out folly.*

There's no reason why the soft answer can't have some good natured humor. Then add serious discussion of the issues. Voters are wiser than many politicians give them credit.

Revulsion with negative campaigning grew during the 1992 election campaign. Citizens and fair-minded candidates can force its further retreat in future campaigns.

November 10, 1992

¹ Proverbs 15:1-2.

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But if some candidates persist in negative campaigning, we citizens must find ways to end the

practice. Candidates who are attack victims need constructive methods for rebuttal and mitigating the effect.

WHAT CITIZENS CAN DO

Citizens can press candidates to cease their negative campaigning. There are a number of things which citizens can do.

Seek Commitment to Fair Campaign Practices

Citizens can ask every candidate to agree to carry out fair campaign practices. One model comes from the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, as follows:¹

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There are basic principles of decency, honesty, and fair play which every candidate for public office has a moral obligation to observe and uphold in order that, after a vigorously contested but fairly conducted campaign, our citizens may exercise their constitutional right to a free, untrammelled, and informed choice of those to whom they will entrust their welfare and that of the Nation. Public office is a public trust which may be undertaken only by those of unblemished character. Every candidate for public office is expected by the voters to adhere to the following basic understandings:

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Citizens can publish and widely distribute lists of those who do and who don't subscribe to fair

practices. They can establish review committees to monitor campaign advertising, speeches, video and radio presentations and then point out practices that violate the Code of Fair Campaign Practices.

Protest against Negative Ads

Whenever a negative ad appears on television and radio and in newspapers, citizens can write the candidate in protest. Such letters will be most influential when they come from the candidate's supporters or supposed constituency, but anyone can write. Here are some samples, based upon ads and practices of recent campaigns:

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Countering Negative Ads

For example, in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate in Wisconsin in 1992 the two candidates perceived as frontrunners levied a barrage of negative attacks on each other. The third candidate, Russ Feingold, considered an underdog, gained from this and rose in opinion poll ranking. To take advantage of public revulsion of mudslinging and to avoid being a victim, he ran a TV ad showing the other two candidates throwing mud at one another. Then as some mud hits Feingold, he says, "Oh, oh! I must be gaining on them!" He won the nomination and was elected to the Senate.

[Add other examples. Perhaps with pictures.]

When my older daughter was in first grade, she learned an effective way to counter name-calling that seems to be a routine part of child culture. A TV ad could be based upon her

technique, as follows:

Scene one. Two six-year old boys (or girls) in a schoolyard.

First boy: You're a stinkeroo and a mealy-mouth mushhead!

Second boy: Ha! I'm rubber, you're glue. The bad things you say about me bounce off and stick on you!

Scene two. The two candidates in cartoon style.

Your opponent: [Accusing you of something.]

Key words appear on screen, such as "quotas", "tax and spend".

You: I'm rubber, you're glue. The bad things you say about me bounce off and stick on you.

The key words bounce off you and stick on him/her.

Narrator: [Citing some action or speech by your opponent or his/her appointees that do what he/she has accused you of, such as preferential hiring or tax increases.]

Another TV ad might feature you, the candidate, in an informal setting, speaking in conversational tone:

Candidate: My friends, you have been hearing my opponent and his supporters say all kinds of bad things about me. But for some strange reason, he [she] never wants to talk about the problems that concern you most, such as [unemployment, environmental hazards, etc.].

It reminds me of a preacher who wrote his gestures on the margin of his sermon. At one point, it said, "Look up at Heaven." [Look up with raised arms] At another place, "Point in scorn." [Point finger at camera] Toward the end of the sermon, the note said, "Argument weak here. Yell loudly."

That's the way with my opponent. He's [she's] weak on the issues so he

[she] tries to distract you the voter with loud accusations about me and my family. I know you're too smart to be fooled by this diversion from matters that really concern you. So I suggest that you call or write him [her] and ask him [her] to stick with important issues.

Thereafter on the stump, the candidate could mention the latest attack by his or her opponent and say, "It reminds me of the preacher...." and the audience would immediately get the point and laugh without the candidate completing story.

Ingenious campaign media specialists can come up with many other humorous ways to counter negative campaign advertising.

In Candidate Debates

If as a candidate you are debating an opponent who is very abusive, you can tell the preacher story, or you can use a method suggested by Buddha.²

[To audience] Friends, you have heard my opponent unleash a scurrilous attack against me. You may wonder how I'm going to respond. I simply want to ask him [her] a question.

[Turning to opponent] (Name), if you offer me a gift and I don't accept it, to whom does the gift belong? Obviously the gift still belongs to you. Likewise with your abuse. I don't accept it. You may keep it for yourself.

And if your audience is appreciative of a more earthy approach, you can add:

[To audience] Let me put in another way. It's like spitting into the wind. The spittle blows right back into your own face.

[To opponent] That's way it is with your abusive words. People in this state who insist

² C. M. Case, *Non-violent Coercion*. pp. 25-26

upon fairness and friendly debate will blow your abuse right back on you. [Pulling out a handkerchief] And to show you that I have no ill-feelings, I offer you my handkerchief to wipe it off.

A Hebrew proverb³ teaches:

*A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Then it adds:

*The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge,
but the mouth of fools pour out folly.*

There's no reason why the soft answer can't have some good natured humor. Then add serious discussion of the issues. Voters are wiser than many politicians give them credit.

Revulsion with negative campaigning grew during the 1992 election campaign. Citizens and fair-minded candidates can force its further retreat in future campaigns.

April 5, 1993

³ Proverbs 15:1-2.

Chapter 11. Term Limits Are Anti-Democratic

A fellow of conservative persuasion said to me not last year, "I wish I could vote in other districts." He was expressing his frustration with the workings of American government and with the make-up of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. He wanted to change other people's representatives to persons holding his own views.

Of course, you can't legally vote in any district except your own. So if you don't like who voters in other districts are electing, what do you do? You try to limit their choice. You advocate limitations on how many terms individuals can serve in a legislative body.

And so it is that the term limit movement has arisen in the United States. Its primary leaders are conservatives who have been unable to produce candidates and programs that gain majority support in numerous congressional and state legislative districts. They are mostly outsiders who want to limit the choice of voters in districts they can't control. They are joined by others, including some liberals, who have backed losing candidates in their own district -- some call them "sore losers" -- and want to change the rules to nullify competition.

Stemming from a motivation to displace incumbents they can't defeat at the polls, term limit advocates have tapped into voter dissatisfaction with government. They place blame on long-term incumbents. So far they have persuaded voters in 14 states to pass measures limiting the number of terms members of Congress and their state legislature may serve. Three more have term limits only for state legislators.

In spite of this popular appeal, the term-limit movement is basically anti-democratic both in spirit and intent.

Democracy is sovereignty of the people. Where members of legislative bodies are chosen by districts, it is up to the people of that district, and they alone, to decide who they want to represent them. If they are satisfied with an incumbent, they should be entitled to reelect her or him as many times as they choose. If they are dissatisfied, they can vote her or him out of office. The only limit should be length of term, not number of terms.

Founders' Intent

This reflects the intent of the founders of the United States of America. They had more than enough of outsiders telling them what they could do or couldn't do. They were tired of the king and a distant Parliament in which they had no representation making laws for them and levying taxes.

The founders insisted that the people are sovereign and must be able to choose their own representatives. They declared independence, stressing the importance of "the consent of the governed". Then they adopted their own constitution.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution realized that direct democracy, as epitomized by the New England town meeting, was unworkable for a large territory, so they established a system of representative democracy (which they referred to as a "republic"). Such a government, James Madison explained in *The Federalist* No. 39,

is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior.

Then he insisted:

It is essential to such a government that it be derived from the general body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it.¹

Based upon this reasoning, the framers limited *length* of terms an incumbent could serve. Thus, the U.S. Constitution specifies a two year term for U.S. representatives, a four year term for the president of the United States, and a six year term for U.S. senators. Federal judges have life tenure in order to assure an independent judiciary.

The framers considered limiting the *number* of terms an incumbent could serve but rejected this idea. This arrangement stood for 164 years until ratification of the 22nd Amendment in 1951 to limit the president to two terms.

In circumstances similar to today's term-limit movement, conservatives were upset because they couldn't defeat Franklin D. Roosevelt in four successive presidential elections. Although Roosevelt was dead, their reprisal was the 22nd Amendment. (Ironically the only two presidents since then who served two full terms and might have gone for a third were Republicans Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan.)

In the most relevant legal case on this matter, *Powell v. McCormack*, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in a 7-1 decision that Congress itself cannot add qualifications beyond the three specified in the Constitution: 25 years of age, seven years of citizenship, and residing in the state to be represented. This nullified refusal by the House of Representatives in January 1967 to seat Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., a Democrat representing Harlem in New York City, for another term because of

¹ *The Federalist*, No. 39. pp. 243-44.

alleged misuse of committee funds in the previous Congress and other alleged offenses. While the case was pending, the voters in Harlem in 1968 re-elected Powell to his 12th (?) term as a tribute to his long championing of civil rights and in defiance of outsiders restricting their choice. But after the Supreme Court ruled in Powell's favor in June 1969, the Harlem voters in the 1970 election chose Charles B. Rangel to replace him in Congress.²

Desire to Change the Rules

In our own era conservatives, joined here and there by some liberal "sore losers", are trying to change the rules of the game to bring about a result that they cannot achieve in competitive politics. They seek to limit the number of terms that incumbents may serve. In doing so, they are attempting to short-circuit the democratic process by passing laws that take away the voters' choice.

Though mostly unspoken, there is also an element of racism. Many long-term state legislators and U.S. representatives are African Americans and Hispanics who have risen to top positions in state legislatures and Congress. They have power based upon seniority. Term-limit advocates want them dislodged. It's another case of white anglos wanting to limit the opportunity of African Americans and Hispanics to choose their own representatives.

Changing the rules by enacting term limits is like deciding during a baseball game, when the opposing pitcher hasn't allowed a hit, that no pitcher may pitch more than six innings. Or it's like saying that no player can play more than 100 consecutive games so that other players may have a chance. Tell that to Cal Ripken with his 1,735 consecutive game streak at the end of the 1992 (update).

It really makes no sense to arbitrarily remove someone from a position solely on the basis of years served. As long as Kareem Abdul Jabbar could play good basketball, the Los Angeles Lakers had a place for him. The Lakers wanted Magic Johnson to keep playing until he voluntarily retired due to the HIV virus, and the Boston Celtics retained Larry Byrd until his bad back caused him to quit. Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron were hitting homeruns when most baseball players their age had retired, and Nolan Ryan was still pitching and throwing no-hitters in his forties. And notice how popular Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Lee Trevino are on the senior golf circuit.

Ability to perform is the key, not number of years of service. For the occasional representative who gets reelected while too frail to serve adequately or who is proven to be corrupt and still gets reelected, there are thousands more whose long experience is a treasure for American

² 1991 CQ Almanac. Washington: CQ Press, 1992. pp. 13-A to 14-A

democracy.

Better Remedies

To be sure, a lot of people are frustrated with governmental performance these days. They include many who have not been politically active but are awakening and want to overcome their neglect. Term-limit advocates are seeking to channel this frustration into blame for long-time office holders.

Such frustration is understandable because government isn't doing too well in solving some seemingly intractable problems. But this failure is not necessarily the fault of persons who have held legislative office for a long time. Newcomers to state legislatures and Congress share responsibility. So do governors, many with limited terms, and the president of the United States, who is limited to two terms. Also many governmental bureaucracies, like those of numerous other large organizations, are bogged down in redtape and are too unresponsive to citizen concerns. Another contributing factor is that we citizens lack consensus on some crucial issues and therefore do not give our representatives clear instructions for what we want done.

There are better remedies than limiting the number of terms. The most readily available is to change incumbents district by district. This happened in the 1992 election season for 110 seats out of the 435 of the U.S. House of Representatives because of retirement or defeat at the polls, the highest turnover in 44 years. Many state legislatures had higher than average turnover, too.

With the 1992 elections over, citizens can and should concentrate on keeping incumbents alert to what they the citizenry expects of them, as discussed in chapter 5.

In 1994 voters will have another opportunity to replace other congressional incumbents if they are dissatisfied. Or to reelect them. Previous chapters have offered ideas on how to enter the electoral competition and to campaign effectively.

This is democracy the old-fashion way. You compete. You work hard in election campaigns and earn your results. You don't restrain voter choice.

Furthermore, there are numerous opportunities to engage in continuous, interactive consent-giving after the election is over. Part Three of this book discusses these opportunities in considerable detail.

The People's Choice: District by District

Although using the rhetoric of democracy, the term-limit movement at its core is undemo-

cratic. It reflects a deep distrust of the citizenry by restricting people's choice of whom to represent them. In effect term-limit advocates want to vote in districts other than their own. This is contrary to democracy as the sovereignty of the people, a concept applicable district by district, state by state.

To be sure, "throw the rascals out" is an ancient sentiment in American democracy. But in our own district, we often realize that the incumbent is "our rascal" and we like him or her. Our representative has helped us when we have had problems with the bureaucracy. The longer he or she has been in office, the more clout he or she has.

Moreover, over the years our representative has honed his or her policy positions to reflect majority opinion in the district. If he or she strays too far from district opinion, we'll replace him or her. This is consent of the governed in action. It's our consent to give or take away, not what some outsiders want. Every two years (four or six for some offices) we can terminate an incumbent's office-holding, or we can choose to continue his or her service for another term.

This is applied sovereignty of the people, which term-limit advocates want to take away. By having limits on length of individual terms, but not on the total number, voters have a regular opportunity to determine how long elected officials will serve. The choice rests with the people in each district, not what some outsiders determine. That's the way it should be in a representative democracy.

Let's stick with democracy!

June 1, 1993

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Such laws would limit not only the choice of today's voters but also the right of voters in the future to reelect incumbents who they want to remain in office.

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While waiting for the next election, citizens can and should concentrate on keeping incumbents alert to what they the citizenry expects of them. They can do this by letters, fax messages, phone calls, delegations, attending meetings where their representatives are appearing. This is a natural

contact because election officials, in positioning themselves to run for reelection, regularly reach out to citizens. (For other ideas, see chapter 5.)

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Let's stick with democracy!

October 9, 1993

Excerpt from Democracy Isn't Easy -- But It's Worth It!
by Howard W. Hallman

Chapter 17. Gaining Information, Offering Views

Effective citizen participation in governmental decision-making must be based upon free and open communication between citizens and public officials. This requires, first, the availability of adequate and timely information for the citizenry and, second, plentiful opportunities for citizens to offer their views and proposals at relevant stages of the decision-making process.

This chapter considers methods public officials use to provide information and receive citizen input from all who are interested in getting involved. Citizens seeking greater involvement can take advantage of these opportunities. Citizens who want public officials in their jurisdictions to be more open to citizen participation can draw upon the illustrations to push for greater accessibility.

ADEQUATE INFORMATION

Knowledge is power. The most knowledgeable persons -- public officials and citizen advocates alike -- have an advantage when decisions are made. To broaden the base of citizen participation, we should therefore insist that all information pertinent to pending policy decisions be fully available to all citizens who want to know.

Dissemination Methods

To whom and how should information be made available? There is a range of answers.

Obviously it would be too expensive to send every document to every citizen, but some kinds of information can be made directly available to a large universe. Governmental agencies regularly send mailings to large numbers of people in the form of tax bills, assessment notices, social security checks, and other matters. From time to time hearing notices and brief information on pending issues could be included. Recipients can be told where they can obtain fuller information.

State and local governments by law are often required to print *legal notices* on certain matters in newspapers of general distribution. However, these notices usually appear in fine print in the classified section and are read by scarcely anyone except lawyers. To announce proposed major undertakings, such as new highways, community development projects, and other large capital improvement projects, it would be preferable to put *display ads* in the news section.

The national government publishes the *Federal Register* five days a week to announce all proposed and adopted regulations. It indicates when and where comments can be made. In 1993

the *Federal Register* ran to ____ pages, so it takes diligence to follow it and ferret out particular kinds of information. Many advocacy organizations in Washington do this, and it can be done by organizations based elsewhere.

Public agencies can go beyond legal requirements for notices by maintaining *mailing lists* of organizations and individuals who request to be kept abreast of particular subjects. For instance, neighborhood and civic associations which want to know about proposed zoning changes; citizen organizations interested in environmental regulations and enterprises affected by such regulations; diverse organizations in the health field which have an interest in policy changes. An agency can take initiative to build its mailing list and also be open to citizen requests to be on the list. Periodic updating can occur to weed out those no longer interested.

Information depositories can be created in public libraries and elsewhere so that concerned citizens have easy access to key reports and other documents. For issues drawing a lot of attention, an agency can establish a *hot line* -- an announced telephone number where trained personnel are available to answer pertinent questions. *Public channels on cable television* offer further opportunities.

Numerous governmental jurisdictions and public agencies follow some or all of these practices. Citizens should stimulate the laggards to do a better job of disseminating relevant information.

At the same time citizens have an obligation to use the information that's publicly available. This can be done by individuals and through committees and associations engaged in dialogue with public officials.

Ferreting Out Information

When public agencies are uncooperative, citizens can turn to the federal *Freedom of Information Act* and state and local counterparts, which require public officials to provide requested information within a reasonable time. If they still refuse, citizens can ask their legislators to help them. Sometimes it may be necessary to go to court to force out the desired information. As last resort, voters can remember the lack of cooperation and openness at the next election.

Citizens can also turn to a potential ally: the *news media*. It's the business of newspapers, news magazines, television, and radio to obtain, publish, and broadcast information of all kinds. By their nature they are usually far ahead of most citizen organizations in the quest for public information and in the search for wrongdoing by public officials. Sometimes, though, they are excessive in their investigation of private lives of public officials and in use of other smear tactics. We shouldn't condone these media excesses, and indeed should condemn them, but we can encourage and make use of legitimate investigative journalism.

Citizens can also initiate their own investigations of suspected mismanagement and mal-

feasance by public officials. A number of citizen organizations in Washington, in state capitals, and major cities and county seats perform this function. It's at the adversary end of the spectrum of citizen/ public official relationships but is appropriate when officials are uncooperative.

TIMELY INPUT

Gaining information is the first step for citizens who want to influence public policy. This needs to be followed by timely input. Emphasis should be on *timely*. Because policy-making often occurs in stages, to be effective citizen input at each stage must occur when decisions are still open. It's much easier to influence a public official who hasn't taken a public position on a specific policy than trying to change her or his announced position.

Advocacy organizations and individual citizens don't have to be asked to express their opinion to public officials. They can and do take the initiative through lobbying techniques, as discussed in previous chapters. They can also take advantage of a variety of arrangements through which public agencies offer all interested citizens an opportunity to make their views known on proposed plans and pending policy decisions. Although only a small minority of citizens may choose to participate in this manner, the opportunity is open to everyone without screening by public officials.

Views and Comments

Numerous public programs of a planning nature publish proposed plans and ask for public comment. For example, city and county master plans, community development projects, construction of schools and recreation facilities, highways and bridges, improvements of rivers and ports, and other kinds of public construction. This provides an opportunity for individuals and advocacy organizations to make their views known.

Alert citizen organizations can anticipate these requests for comments by keeping track of what public agencies are planning. This they can do by talking informally with agency staff who have responsibility for preparing plans. Citizens can even offer their views on uncompleted plans.

They can also undertake their own studies and work out a consensus on what views they want to express during the formal comment period when it arrives. This period may be only 30 or 60 days. In this short time voluntary organizations may be hard pressed to study the plan and come to agreement on whether to support, oppose, or suggest modification. Anticipation is essential for citizen effectiveness.

Sometimes citizens are invited to provide written comments on proposed plans. On other occasions they can offer testimony at public hearings and participate in community meetings, workshops, and conferences. These events provide opportunities to achieve face-to-face interchange with public officials.

Public Hearings.

Public boards and commissions and staff units of public agencies often use formal hearings as a means of achieving citizen input. When done properly, the hearing body provides public notice sufficiently in advance so that potential witnesses can prepare testimony. The notice should state the purpose of the hearing and indicate where pertinent background documents are available. The hearing should be at a time and place that's convenient for potential witnesses. In localities this might encompass evening and Saturday hearings and be located in neighborhoods particularly affected by the proposed plan.

From a public agency's perspective hearings are valuable as a means of assessing public opinion on proposed plans and administrative policies. They offer agency board members and staff an opportunity to hear a wide range of opinions and to gauge the depth of feelings on the issue at hand. Hearings can also provide new information and expert analysis of pending proposals. Persons on the hearing panel can ask questions and engage in dialogue with witnesses.

Some hearings are open to all comers and stay in session as long as there are witnesses. Other hearings permit only invited witnesses to testify but do allow other interested parties to file written testimony for the record. Many hearings are in the middle between these two extremes.

Where numerous witnesses want to testify, the hearing panel usually allows only brief oral testimony from each witness (say, three to five minutes) and rarely asks questions. After eight to twelve hours panel members are saturated and exhausted. Where oral testimony is restricted to agency representatives and outside technical experts (and this occurs often in congressional hearings), the views of grassroots citizens and even public interest advocacy organizations are rarely heard.

The best hearings achieve a balance between too much and too little by scheduling witnesses who are likely to provide a fair cross-section of perspectives on the issue at hand and to allow sufficient time for panel members to ask questions. Sometimes persons with a range of views are at the witness table at the same time, and the panel benefits from listening to them debate. Afterward panel members can read written testimony submitted by persons who weren't able to testify.

Citizens who want to be effective at public hearings should make careful preparation. They should study the proposal meticulously, get the facts straight, analyze arguments for and against the plan, and perhaps develop a counter proposal. They should select an articulate person to represent them, though not necessarily a professional (for grassroots persons-of-the-people are often the most effective witnesses). They can prepare visual material and offer a written statement to the hearing panel that is longer in length than their oral presentation.

Depending upon the nature of the hearing, a citizen organization might assemble a sizable

group of supporters in the hearing room. Then when their witness is testifying, he or she might ask that all who share the organization's point of view to please stand up. But there's a delicate balance between showing broad support and trying to intimidate the panel with a raucous crowd. Hearing officers are human and may react negatively to coercive tactics, thereby harming the cause of the citizen advocates.

As to the hearing panel, attentive listening is essential. If panel members treat the hearing as a pro-forma, it-doesn't-make-any-difference event, its value is lost and witnesses become alienated over the process. If nothing comes of the hearing or the dominant opinion of witnesses is ignored without explanation, citizen cynicism increases.

Sometimes hearings on highly charged issues, such as abortion, racial integration, or location of a highway or public facility considered undesirable (such as prison, sewage treatment plant, landfill, incinerator), produce so much rancor that they are counterproductive. To lessen this danger, adequate explanation of proposed policies should be presented and a broad range of witnesses should be called to testify. The presiding officer should be fair and unbiased but also should insist upon decorum on the part of the audience. Democracy in action can be stormy, but leaders need to insist upon mutual personal respect among persons with opposing viewpoints.

Even better is to achieve a substantial amount of citizen participation long before a project reaches the hearing stage, including methods designed to mediate differences and achieve as broad a consensus as possible. Ideas along these lines are offered in the chapter 19.

Community Meetings

Another way for achieving dialogue between citizens and public officials is through community meetings (sometimes called town meetings). They are less formal than public hearings and generally permit greater two-way interchange.

Often a citizen organization schedules a community meeting and invites legislators and other public officials to attend. This may be a regular meeting of the organization or one called especially for this purpose. Some legislators and elected chief executives organize their own town meetings. Having a citizen organization to serve as the primary sponsor, rather than a public official, is likely to achieve greater openness in dealing with a full panoply of citizen concerns. But this doesn't preclude public officials from taking the lead where citizens are not holding community meetings to meet with government representatives.

Having a good community meeting requires careful preparation. The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated, and the span of the agenda should be proportional to the anticipated length of the meeting. If there are to be speeches or panel presentations, speakers should understand how long they may speak. Impromptu speakers from the floor should also have this understanding.

Invited public officials should be told in advance how the meeting will proceed and what is expected of them. They might be asked to speak first and then respond to questions. Or citizen presenters might go first and the public official asked to respond to what they have said.

Whatever the order of agenda, emphasis should be upon honest dialogue. To be avoided is mere propaganda by public agencies and malicious haranguing by citizens. Debate can be vigorous without becoming nasty. Democracy depends upon even the staunchest adversaries recognizing that their opponents have worth and dignity as human beings.

Workshops and Conferences

Greater depth for study, education, and dialogue can occur through workshops and conferences. They are generally longer than community meetings and give more people opportunity to express their views.

Workshops can draw in resource persons from citizen organizations, public agencies, colleges, universities, and other institutions as resource persons. However, the sessions should not be dominated by outside experts, for citizens need a chance to ask questions, share information they have, and offer their opinions.

Often workshops are held as part of a larger conference. Part of the conference is devoted to sets of simultaneous workshops, and part is used for plenary sessions featuring speakers, panels, and reports from workshops. Some conferences are structured to come up with specific recommendations on public policy issues. In this case a drafting committee can prepare resolutions for presentation to the whole body.

Legislators, elected chief executives, and department heads can be invited to speak to the conference. They might serve as keynote speaker, respondent to workshop reports, or closing speaker. There can be opportunity for questions and comments from the floor.

Where a conference comes up with positions on policy proposals, these recommendations can be presented to public officials who are present. They can also be offered in writing and personally after the conference is over.

Some conferences are held not to address public officials directly but rather are organized so that citizens can work out their positions on public issues. Sometimes conferences are called as a means of building stronger coalitions among like-minded organizations.

Conferences can also be used to bring together groups which seem to be in contention with one another, such as racial and ethnic groups, factions within neighborhood organizations, and advocacy groups of different persuasion (for instance, those with differing approaches to dealing with crime).

Workshops at such conferences facilitate two-way education and dialogue. Earnest, face-to-face conversation replaces shouting from a distance. Sometimes bargaining can occur and compromise positions can be worked out. Mutual acceptance of one another and better understanding can develop even if individuals and groups continue to disagree on particular issues.

Summation

The various methods that public agencies use to provide adequate information to citizens and seek timely input into governmental decision-making are quite valuable for American democracy. They complement lobbying and other advocacy activities that citizens initiate.

All who seek information and want to offer their input can do so without pre-selection by public officials. This complements processes of in-depth study and planning with designated citizen representatives on advisory committees and task forces (see chapter 19).

Each method of citizen involvement has its proper place. Altogether they facilitate broad, ongoing participation in the consent-giving process.

May 27, 1993

DEMOCRACY ISN'T EASY -- BUT IT'S WORTH IT!

by

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October 9, 1993

DEMOCRACY ISN'T EASY -- BUT IT'S WORTH IT!

by Howard W. Hallman

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DEMOCRACY ISN'T EASY -- BUT IT'S WORTH IT!

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1. Consent of the Governed: Continuous and Interactive

Sending a message is not enough...Continuous involvement is necessary ...Timeliness and persistence are essential...Steadfast commitment is required

2. How to Become Involved

Many opportunities to participate...Among options: vote, work in political campaigns, run for office, participate in governmental decision-making, participate in civic activities...Reaffirmation of citizenship

Part Two. Making the Most of Elections

3. You Can't Beat Somebody with Nobody

Nearly half million popularly elected officials...Election cycle (a continuously revolving stage)...Getting on stage...Amateurs or career politicians?...Selection committees

4. Positioning

Commonality...Entering the political arena...Deciding when to run...Influencing positioners...Public benefits

5. Keeping Incumbents Alert

Outlook of legislators...What citizens expect...How legislators act... Contacting legislators in their districts...Impact of fundraising... Executive officials

6. Infusing Political Parties

Two party dominance...Pluralistic endeavors...Depth of involvement (marginal, active volunteers)...Party structure (precinct, local, state, national)...Candidates and elected officials

7. Campaigns to Accentuate the Positive

Basic elements of a political campaign (rudimentary "how to", referring to other sources for more complete guidance)...Campaigns to elevate, not tear down...Major issues to deal with and how to approach them constructively, sometimes courageously

8. ...And Eliminate the Negative

Code of Fair Campaign Practices...What individuals can do to eliminate negative campaigning...How candidates can respond to negative campaigning without become negative (especially through humor)

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10. Voting: Democracy's Life Depends On It

Why vote?...Trends...Who participates less?...Reasons for nonparticipation...How to increase voting

11. Term Limits Are Anti-Democratic

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Part Three. Influencing Public Policy

12. Processes of Governmental Decision-Making

Key relationships in decision-making...Types of decisions (major, routine) ...Enacting legislation...Budget-making...Project planning...Program implementation...Key questions on how to influence decisions

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18. Interactive Media

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19. Representative Participation

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20. Continuity of Involvement in Local Decision-Making

Neighborhood planning...Local budget-making...Benefits and costs

21. Achieving Greater Involvement in State and Federal Decision-Making

Citizen input into federal budget...Nationwide study of big issues ...Summation

22. Role of Protest

Notable examples: abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, populism, civil rights...Value for democracy...Techniques (including withdrawal of consent) ...Limitations (calls attention to needs but doesn't get inside decision-making process)

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23. Politics: The Art of the Potential

Reprise of methods for continuous, interactive consent...Political processes...Democratic involvement...Politics as art of, not merely the possible, but also the potential

June 21, 1993

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Excerpt from a book in progress

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Chapter 1. Consent of the Governed: Continuous and Interactive

.....

Sending a Message Is Not Enough

.....

Sending a message is like a blast of wind across a broad, flowing river. The wind makes ripples and sometimes creates waves vigorous enough to swamp a small boat. But "ole man river, he jest keeps rollin' along."

The rudder that steers the ship of state and the propellers that move it along operate beneath the surface. The engines driving the propellers are in the depth of the ship. Although the captain and the helmsman are topside on the bridge, they are totally dependent on the crew stationed throughout the vessel.

When a strong wind arises, the captain will steer the ship into the wind to absorb the storm's blows and then return to the previous course when the wind dies down. The distant owners may send radio messages to the captain, but they can't compel him to change course. Only when the ship returns to homeport can they replace the captain. A rebellious crew can stop the ship, but it can't make it go unless it takes control in an orderly manner or bargains with the captain and works out a compromise.

So it is with government in a democracy. There are many ways to send messages, to create waves. This has an effect, for most elective officials are sensitive to what they hear from their constituents. Occasional gusts, like afternoon thunderstorms, attract attention, but more influential is steady pressure from concerned citizens, like the prairie wind that never ceases. Persons who are continuously involved in the political process usually make the greatest impact.

Continuous Involvement Is Necessary

Here we have the clue for making democracy more effective: continuous involvement by the citizenry. This is the lesson of more than 200 years of experience with democracy in the United States of America. We have taken an ideal expressed in the Declaration of Independence -- that the just powers of government are derive from the consent of the governed -- and developed numerous ways for achieving consent.

In American democracy we citizens are not merely customers receiving governmental services. We are far more than stockholders choosing a board of directors, selecting a management team, and letting them run the business. We are persons who first decide who shall govern, and then we constantly interact with our legislators, our elected executives, and those whom they appoint.

We citizens are not content to sit back and wait for the next election to give our consent once again or elect somebody else. As individuals, we lobby elected and appointed officials to influence their decisions. We form advocacy organizations to provide collective strength to lobbying efforts. Sometimes we assemble with like-minded people to express our grievances.

Formal patterns of interaction between citizens and public officials are built into governmental operations. Public hearings and advisory committees are widespread. Citizen participation in community planning is commonplace. Citizens are involved in implementation of numerous public programs and often undertake parallel civic activities.

Our participation is a continuous process, not merely a series of disconnected episodes. Consent-giving events, such as periodic elections of public officials and votes-by-ballot on constitutional amendments and referendums, are preceded by months of campaigning. Soon after election many incumbents begin to think ahead toward the next election, and this affects their relations with constituents. Persons positioning themselves to run for public office also establish relationships with the electorate. Lobbying and other forms of citizen advocacy go on throughout the year. So do formalized processes of citizen participation in public decision-making.

Thus, we can say that after 200 years of American democracy **consent of the governed in the United States has become a continuous, interactive process.** Not perfect, for full involvement of the citizenry is incomplete. But we've come a long ways since 1776.

Timeliness and Persistence Are Essential

Citizen participation in governmental affairs must be continuous because the decision-making processes of government are continuous. Some of the consent-giving processes are tied to the calendar, especially elections. Others have stages occurring in regular sequence, such as adoption of legislation, preparing budgets, and drawing up community plans.

Politicians and lobbyists understand this. They focus not merely on specific decisions but rather on the entire decision-making process from beginning to end. They know when and how to exercise their influence. They are persistent.

Citizen activists likewise need to realize that to be influential their involvement must have longevity and also must be timely and properly directed. This can be seen in three very common sets of decisions in American democracy: elections, legislation, and community planning.

Elections. In the electoral process politicians understand that election day is but a culmination of months of positioning and campaigning that goes through several major stages.

PRELIMINARIES

Positioning -----> Lining up support -----> Announcement of candidacy

SEEKING NOMINATION (several patterns)

For local & state offices in some states:

Primary campaigning -----> Primary election

For local & state offices in other states:

Party convention + option of -----> Challenge primary election

For U.S. president:

State primaries, caucuses, conventions -----> National convention

GENERAL ELECTION

Campaigning -----> Voting

Well before the deadline for filing nominating petitions, potential candidates obtain commitments for support, political leaders form alliances, and some potential candidates fall by the wayside. Interaction between candidates and the electorate begins during the positioning period. Promises made by potential candidates then and during the formal campaign will affect policy decisions made months later if they are elected to office.

Legislation. In the enactment of legislation lobbyists know that a new law is the product of a months-long process. In unicameral legislative bodies, such as most city and county councils and the Nebraska legislature, the major steps are these:

Drafting --> Introduction --> Committee --> Floor --> Approval by
bill consideration action chief executive

In bicameral bodies, such as the U.S. Congress and 49 state legislatures, a bill passed by one house goes to the other house for committee consideration and floor action. Then differences are resolved by a conference committee. The bill then goes back to the two houses for final action before going to the president or governor.

Skilled lobbyists are involved in all stages. They may offer a draft bill or look over what legislators and administrative officials have drafted. They help line up sponsors within the legislative body. They testify at public hearings and confer with committee members. They mobilize grassroots support. Sometimes they push for floor amendments. They urge the chief executive to approve or veto the legislation.

In contrast, many citizens concerned about a particular bill do not become involved until legislation is ready for a floor vote. They may urge approval or defeat of particular amendments, but the fundamental shape of the legislation is rarely altered at this late stage.

Community Planning. In planning improvement projects public officials are aware that the adopted plan is the result of many months of study and design. For a neighborhood plan, to be adopted by the city planning commission and city council, the process is as follows:

DEVELOPING PLAN

Define problem ---> Set goals & objectives ---> Delineate land use & specify projects ---> Approval by planning director

GAINING APPROVAL

Planning board hearing -----> Planning board approval -----> Council hearing -----> Council approval

The final plan is greatly influenced by how the problem is defined and what objectives are established. Citizens who wait until the public hearing to offer their views may discover that options they preferred have already been precluded.

In contrast, where there are official arrangements for citizen participation, citizens can get involved in all the stages of community planning and work cooperatively with public officials. Where a unit of government is weak in citizen participation, citizens to be influential must assert themselves and offer their views at the early stages, long before the formal public hearing.

Steadfast Commitment Is Required

Thus we see that effective citizen participation in public policy formulation requires

meaningful involvement from the earliest stage until final, formal decisions occur. This is true for elections, enactment of legislation, adoption of plans, and other major public decisions. In this manner consent of the governed gains full expression. The result is **representative government in a participatory mode**.

For this to happen, public officials must have a strong commitment to full participation by the citizenry, and numerous citizens must be vigorously engaged in continuous interaction with public officials. Democracy of this sort isn't easy to obtain and sustain, but it's worth it.

It can result in a high quality of public decisions, based upon intimate knowledge of what the people want and will support. And it can yield a nation of citizens who have trust and confidence that their governments are functioning in a manner they desire.

So it is that "consent of the governed" is not merely a ringing phrase from the Declaration of Independence. Continuous, interactive consent-giving is an operational tool for American democracy.

March 25, 1993

Universal suffrage. Today every citizen age 18 and older may vote except for a few felons who have lost this right. In 1789 only white, male property owners had this privilege.

Numerous elected offices. According to the latest count, there are 497,155 popularly elected officials in the United States.¹ Of the federal officials specified in the original U.S. Constitution only members of the House of Representatives were elected directly by the people.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution perceived consent mainly as a process for selecting governmental officials, directly or indirectly, and then letting them run the government as they deemed best. They didn't want political parties. They divided powers of government among executive, legislative, and judicial branches and between the national government and the states in order to thwart the effects of factions.

In the original constitution only members of the U.S. House of Representatives were elected directly by the people. Members of the U.S. Senate were chosen by state legislatures. The president of the United States was selected by electors from each state, perceived to be wise men working in a nonpartisan manner. The president appointed members of the Supreme Court with the advice and consent of the Senate.

In __ of the 13 newly independent states, voters elected the governor, but in the other __ the legislature made the selection. Each state made its own rules on who could vote, generally limiting suffrage to white, male property owners.

The American people, though, insisted upon broader opportunities for providing their consent. After the First Congress convened, interest groups appeared and tried to influence legislation. During the Second Congress embryonic political parties commenced to function. Since these two instruments of American democracy have grown and grown.

By the third presidential election political parties were putting up candidates to become electors, thus ending the nonpartisan nature of that institution. By 18__ all governors were elected directly by the voters. Not until the 1913 with the passage of the 16th Amendment were U.S. senators elected directly by the people, but by then __ of the 48 states provided for a popular vote binding on the state legislature.

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Popularly Elected Officials" *1987 Census of Governments, Government Organization*, vol. 1, no. 2. p. 1. Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, January 1990.

It took even longer to achieve universal suffrage. During the first quarter of the 19th century the states reduced property requirements for voting. In 18__ (name of state) granted women the right to vote, and __ other states followed suit until all of them were encompassed by the 19th Amendment, adopted in 19__. The 13th Amendment, adopted in 186__, eliminated racial restrictions in voting eligibility, but not only the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were all state impediments to racial equality in voting removed.

March 10, 1993

Chapter 6. Infusing Political Parties

Political parties are vital instruments of American democracy. Although some pundits describe their decline and possible demise, political parties are alive and flourishing today. They play important roles in achieving the consent of the governed. They provide numerous opportunities for citizens seeking greater political participation.

Political parties make their greatest contribution in the electoral process, but they also provide a basis for formulating governmental policies and carrying out governmental operations. Among the roles played by political parties in the United States are these:

Electoral

- Provide framework for nominating candidates for public office.
- Organize, finance, and carry out campaigns in general election.

Legislative

- Provide basis for organizing legislative body and working out legislative policies of majority and minority.
- Establish ties between elected chief executive (president, governor, mayor) and legislative delegation of his or her party.

Governmental operations

- Source for recruiting persons to fill top policy positions and, in some jurisdictions, many other governmental jobs ("patronage").
- Channel of influence on executive policies, regulatory matters, and awarding grants and contracts.
- Assistance to citizens in solving service-delivery problems.

For individuals

- An avenue for fulfilling ambition for public office.
- A means for promoting a cause.
- An outlet for political expression.

For society

- To the extent parties bring together diverse people, a source for social cohesion.
- But to the extent they polarize the electorate into hostile segments, a divisive influence.

If you have an interest in fulfilling one of these roles (but hopefully not the last mentioned), you will find that participation in a political party is a worthy endeavor. For the most part political

parties are remarkably open to citizens who take the effort to get involved. You don't have to have an invitation to participate, but you do need to know how political parties are organized, how they function, when and how best to get involved. With this knowledge and a strong commitment you can help make the party of your choice a more effective instrument of democracy.

Pluralistic Endeavors

If you decide that you want to become involved in political party activities, you might first explore whether one of the two major parties can provide a suitable home.

As you examine the Democratic Party and the Republican Party carefully, you will discover that both are pluralistic endeavors. They are amalgamations that enable persons sharing common political values to work together in election campaigns and governance. Neither maintains ideological purity. Neither is a cohesive monolith with a unified, top-down hierarchy. Rather each of them is composed of mostly autonomous local and state units which come together in a loose-knit, national federation.

Neither party has formal membership requiring strict creedal adherence or payment of dues. The closest you come to joining is by stating your party preference in voter registration or at the primary polling place, and at that in only three-fourths of the states. Mainly it is a matter of personal identity.

Democrats and Republicans range from persons who merely identify with the party label but do little to support the party to those who hold party jobs and run for public office on the party ticket. At the core are party stalwarts, strong Democrats and strong Republicans, who usually vote the straight ticket. At the outer edge are weak Democrats and weak Republicans who are willing to split their ticket and vote for candidates from another party or independent candidates.

If you don't like either major party and don't want to infuse and change one of them, you can join a third party or support independent candidates bearing no party label. Over the years smaller parties have formed, grown, sometimes lingered for many years, merged into one of the major parties, or faded away. Independent candidates have emerged, attracted support, and occasionally been elected. Third parties and independent candidates have contributed to American democracy, and still do, by providing an outlet for voters dissatisfied with the two major parties and for advancing new ideas.

Nevertheless, two party dominance has persisted. Today's Democratic Party can trace its heritage to the earliest days of the United States of America while the Republican Party was born in the 1850s, functioning as broad coalitions but offering enough differences to provide choice for voters.

Because persons identified as Democrats and Republicans fill most of the partisan, elected offices in the United States, the two parties deserve the most attention for persons who want to work in the political arena.

Depth of Involvement

Persons who identify with the Democratic and Republican parties extend from those on the outer edge who claim party identity but don't even vote to an inner core of public officials elected as party nominees. In this sense party identity can be visualized as a set of circles within circles, as shown in Figure 6-2. These circles divide Democrats and Republicans into several bands, based upon depth of party involvement. Citizens becoming more involved in party activities can move from the outside toward the inside.

Figure 6-2. Affiliates of Major Political Parties

Marginal involvement. The outermost portion of Band One contains persons who identify with the party but do little or nothing beyond voting. Sometimes they don't even vote. They are passive identifiers who oftentimes vote a split ticket at the polls. Where their party identity is known, as occurs in states where voter registration and primary voting reveals party affiliation, party workers can seek them out, encourage them to come to the polls and vote for the party ticket, and urge them to get involved in party activities.

Millions of identifiers do participate in politics to some extent. They almost always vote in the general election and often in competitive party primaries. They wear candidate buttons, display bumper stickers, put out yard signs, make financial contributions, attend coffees for candidates, go to rallies. Mostly they are active just before an election rather than year round. However, they form a pool of volunteers who candidates can recruit to work in their behalf prior to the primary election or nominating convention. They also serve as a reserve corps of persons who party officials can enlist in a variety of activities necessary to sustain the party.

Active volunteers. Band Two consists of party identifiers who devote time to work for the party or particular candidates. Party volunteers help with multiple tasks required to keep the organization going: answering phones, record keeping, fundraising, telephone polling, door-to-door canvassing, voter registration, holding coffees, organizing rallies, getting out the vote, and other campaign activities. Volunteers for candidates do many of the same things, but their loyalty is more toward their candidate than the party as a whole. A gradation occurs between candidate and party volunteers, for many of the former are drawn from the latter and are likely to work for the whole ticket in the general election.

Citizens who want to get more involved in the electoral process will find that volunteering for party or candidate support activities is an excellent place to start. Most campaign organizations welcome volunteers with open arms, though sometimes they use them poorly or show insufficient appreciation.

For persons who want to become a party officer or the party's candidate for a public office, volunteering is often the place to begin. You become known. You get the feel of politics and learn the lay of the land. You meet people who may become your supporters. You support other officeseekers this year with the hope that they will support you in future years.

Party Structure

Band Three contains persons holding party offices and serving as delegates to party conventions. Altogether the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States have approximately xxx,xxx positions of this sort. In structure the two parties are built from bottom-up, but some party operations have a top-down process.

Precinct offices. The base for both parties is the approximately 100,000 local voting precincts in the United States (called by different names around the country). Potentially each of them can have a party officer. [Describe how they are chosen, differing around the country.]

Precinct workers are the field force of the Democratic and Republican parties. They reach out to voters in their precinct, distribute campaign literature, collect funds, and get out the vote. In many states they also play a role in selecting members of local and state party committees and in choosing convention delegations. For that reason organizations with a particular political orientation, such as "left", "right", minority rights, encourage and assist their members to become precinct officers. Individuals looking for a career in politics can also start at this level. A 19__ survey found that __ percent of all precinct positions were filled, which meant that __ were vacant. Filling vacancies is therefore the place to begin, but as periodic elections are held for precinct offices, they can be contested.

Local committees. Local party committees are built upon the precinct foundation. The Democratic and Republican parties have committees in virtually all of the 3,042 counties in the United States and in a large number of cities, New England towns, and township with strong governmental powers.

Members of local party committees are chosen by [compete]

Local party committees are basically autonomous. They may offer a primary slate or let candidates compete and then support the winners in the general election. They are free to take positions on public issues and are not forced to follow a party line issued by the state committee or national committee. If local party officials don't like the candidates offered by their party's state or national unit, they usually sit on their hands rather than oppose them outright.

Where a state legislative district or a congressional district encompasses more than one local governmental jurisdiction, local party committees come together in the nominating process. In some states they hold nominating conventions to select the party's candidate. In other states the candidate is chosen in a primary election, and the aggregate of local committees supports her or him in the general election.

State committees. Local party committees are the building blocks of state committees. [how they are organized. do voters in some states vote for state party officers?]

Many state committees play a prominent role in selection of party nominees for state office: governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and other elected executive officers. In yesteryears party leaders in a number of states decided their party's nominee and got it ratified by the state convention or in the party primary election. This happens less frequently now because candidates usually come forth as self-starters, but sometimes party leaders have a hand in recruiting who they

think will be a strong candidate and issuing an endorsement. In __ states the state committee is responsible for organizing and conducting a nominating convention for state offices.

Like local committees, state party committees are autonomous and are not directed what to do by the national committee. However, during the past 20 years many state committees have received technical assistance and financial contributions from their national committee. They in turn have offered assistance to local party committees, such as computerized lists of registered voters, training for candidates, and sometimes financial donations.

National committee. The national committees of the Democratic and Republican parties are composed of persons chosen by state committees.....[role of an incumbent in picking national chair]

The central task of the national committee is to organize and run the quadrennial national convention to nominate the party's candidate for president. As an extension of this responsibility, the national committee establishes rules for selection of delegates from the states, such as when state primaries may be held and the gender composition of delegates. Court rulings have affirmed the right of the national committee to adopt binding requirements that state party organizations must observe even if it means changing state laws.

The actual presidential nominating process is, however, decentralized. __ states hold primaries, __ states have conventions, __ rely on caucuses, and __ have a combination of these methods. In some states convention delegates are chosen by congressional districts while elsewhere there is a statewide slate. [check this]

The national convention selects the party's nominee for president and vice president and adopts a party platform. Since 1956 Republican and Democratic nominees for president have had the nomination sewn up before the convention opened, and therefore their representatives have had a strong influence on the platform but not unchecked control. The platform, though, is not legally binding on the party's presidential and vice-presidential candidate, on the party's representatives in Congress, or on state and local party committees.

Although national party committees cannot command state and local committees, they may get involved in state and local party affairs by making financial contributions to candidates, offering technical assistance and training to party officials and candidates, and in some instances helping to obtain a strong candidate to run for an open seat in Congress or against an incumbent of the other party.

Convention delegates. Precinct officials and members of local, state, and party committees serve for specific terms. Delegates to party conventions are chosen just for that event (though many hold other party positions). In 1992 the Democratic National Convention had ___ delegates, and

the Republican National Convention had _____. In one cycle of local and state nominating conventions for local and state office, approximately _____ persons serve as delegates.

Party members often seek election as a convention delegate in order to support a particular candidate or slate of candidates. The candidates themselves often decide who may run in their behalf for delegate positions.

Candidates and Elected Officials

Candidates. Band Four of the circle of circles describing the two major political parties is composed of candidates for public office. In previous chapters we have noted that most of them initiate their own quest for office rather than being sought out and slated by party committees or core leadership groups. They position themselves to run. Once in office they position themselves to achieve reelection. We'll look at how they campaign in the next chapter.

Elected officials. The inner circle of the Democratic and Republican parties holds public officials elected on the party ticket. It is a multinucleated circle, for elected officials are as varied as the party whose label they carry. Within one unit of government -- local, state, national -- legislators and the elected chief executive often form separate nuclei for party activities. So much so that political scientists speak of the "presidential party" and the "congressional party", with similar division in state and local arenas.

Legislative units. Political parties form the basis for organizing the U.S. Congress, the state legislatures except Nebraska which has a nonpartisan unicameral body, and many city and county councils. This occurs as persons from the same political party join together to choose legislative officers and work out a party agenda. Ordinarily the majority party chooses the presiding officer, except where the vice president or lieutenant governor presides over the senate. Committee chairs may be chosen by the legislative committees themselves with the majority party prevailing, by the party caucus, or by the party's elected leader (speaker of the house, majority leader of the senate, chair of city or county council). Party identity is also the basis for organizing the minority in legislative bodies.

By and large the legislative party is independent of the national, state, or local party committee and the elected chief executive, even if the latter is from the same party. Although they have the same party identity, these different units function as co-equals. Exceptions occur....[tight party structure]

Chief executive. It is customary for the president of the United States to be the dominant person in his (someday her) party. He chooses the national party chair, and the national committee works under guidance, sometimes tight control, of the White House. But even if the president is nominal party leader, he still must deal collegially with members of his party in Congress. When

they are from the same party, sometimes the relationship is cooperative, at other times prickly. When the president is of one party and Congress (or at least one its houses) is of the opposite party, party division is an important factor in executive-congressional relationships.

A similar pattern prevails in many states and in local governmental units with partisan elections. The governor, mayor, and county executive may dominate the party machinery, but party members in the state legislature, city and county council act independently. In some states, however, party organization is cohesive enough (perhaps descendent of an old-time machine) that the governor can play a more dominant role over the legislature. And in some localities the mayor or county executive can assert similar control. This happens most frequently where the chief executive has control of a sizable number of jobs and can use patronage as an instrument of dominance.

Conclusion

In recent years millions of Americans have expressed dissatisfaction with the Democratic and Republican parties and their candidates. As an outlet for their frustration, they have voted for Ross Perot, other independents, and third party candidates. This is quite appropriate, especially to send a message. Nonetheless, dissatisfied citizens may be able to achieve greater long-lasting results by infusing the two major political parties. After all, office holders affiliated with these parties hold most of the legislative and elected executive positions in the 38,984 general purpose governments in the United States [account for nonpartisan positions]. The parties nominate them and work for their election. While office holders in the American system are not bound to a party line on policy issues, a good deal of public policy development occurs in a party setting, especially in legislative bodies.

As we have seen, selection of party committees is bottom-up: party members choose precincts officials who select local committee members, local committees elect members of the state committee, state committees select members of the national committee. Also, individual legislators elect their party leaders within the legislative body. This same bottom-up process operates in selecting delegates to state and national nominating conventions.

This being the nature of the Democratic and Republican parties, citizens who want to get involved in party politics will find that their best entree is in their home locality. Organizations desiring to infuse political parties with their ideas and their people will do best with a grassroots strategy. From this base they will be able to influence who serves on state and national party committees, who will be delegates to nominating conventions, and the party platforms adopted there.

Political parties, renewed through grassroots infusion, can continue to play important roles as essential instruments of American democracy.

