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Making Democracy Work

By Hedrick Smith

The history and institutions of American democracy are a source of national pride to Americans. For most people, the trip to Washington is a rite of passage, a moment of homage beneath the vaulting dome of Congress or of silent awe at the simple, stately elegance of the White House. The monument to George Washington towers above the city, a symbol of unwavering strength. Thomas Jefferson, tall and far-seeing, gazes out across the Potomac River. Abraham Lincoln, thoughtful and compassionate, looks down on us, his wisdom inscribed on his memorial.

And yet today, Americans are profoundly dissatisfied with the performance of our national government. Opinion polls show that public trust in the leaders and institutions of government has been declining for several decades. One survey in May 1994 found that 75 percent of those polled thought that “major changes” were needed in “the way the federal government works.”

Popular discontent was dramatically expressed in the 1994 election, when voters swept Democrats out of control in the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. Just two years earlier, 19 percent of the voters rejected the presidential candidates of the two major political parties to support a political neophyte, Ross Perot, in what was the most massive repudiation of the political establishment in an American election.

Voter participation has been declining, because many Americans feel powerless and think that Washington does not care about them and their problems. “The nation as a whole is losing all respect for the political process,” asserted an automotive worker from Michigan. “There’s a sense that the system is broken,” said a medical marketing manager from California. A bank officer from Georgia was critical of elected officials: “They’re on an ego trip. They sit around playing power games with each other.”

People are frustrated but they do not understand why. They focus on personalities though the obstacles to better government may lie deeper—in the system itself.

The Constitution provides a system of separated and shared powers—the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. But few people understand that constitutional checks and balances have been accentuated—some say aggravated—by the political divisions of government during the last six presidencies. For 22 out of the last 28 years, the White House and the Congress (or part of Congress) have been controlled by the opposite political parties—sometimes Republican presidents facing Democratic majorities in Congress, or vice versa under President Clinton.



Hedrick Smith.

Such partisan divisions have contributed to some of the policy deadlocks over the federal budget, the war in Central America in the 1980s or American intervention in Bosnia in the 1990s, the level of military spending, and debates about the proper size and role of the federal government. With partisan divisions, no one is in full control of government. The voters do not know whom to blame when the government is not working well.

Another important influence on how government operates and on how the public views Washington is “the shadow government” of the media and the organized lobbies. They are not mentioned in the Constitution, but they exercise great power in the name of the people. In the 1990s, the size of the government has actually shrunk, but the growth of the “shadow government” has been explosive. Some scholars believe that the media and special interest lobbying have helped undermine public confidence in government and made it harder for Congress and the President to do their jobs.

Still another important influence on how Washington works is the way our election campaigns are financed. Throughout much of our history, political parties organized and financed most election campaigns. But since World War II, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, individual politicians have taken an increasing role in organizing and funding their own campaigns. This has given them much greater independence from their party leaders.

As a result, many go their own way rather than working together, but it is only in working together that they can achieve results.

Our documentary and discussion series, **The People and the Power Game**, examines these trends to show how our political system actually works and to help explain public discontent with government. From extensive research and interviews with virtually all the important political participants, we have put together stories and case studies that take voters and students inside government to see the President, Vice President, House Speaker, Senate Majority Leader, members of Congress, top lobbyists and major network anchors in action. Then we talk to them about what they do and why they do it. Our approach is to use real life stories

and interesting people and events to show how the constitutional system of checks and balances has been changed by the techniques and technology of modern politics.

Finally, we bring together a representative sample of American voters from all over the country to talk with experts and political professionals about how we can make American democracy work better. Their discussion generated ideas for reform, which are a model for classroom discussions and for debate among voters and civic groups all across America. The goal is to go beyond the personalities of campaign politics to think about the strengths, the weaknesses, and the future of American democracy and how we can all make it fairer and more effective.

Why a Citizen's Guide for The People and the Power Game?

“Our democracy will not work better and will not be strengthened unless we the people as citizens engage ourselves in the great enterprise of making our democracy work better.” With these words Hedrick Smith closes his production, **The People and the Power Game**. To jump-start you, the American citizen, to engage you in democracy, to call you to action, we present this citizen's guide. The Harwood Group, under the sponsorship of

the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, has identified the following five areas of civic life:

- **Official spaces:** public meetings or government forums;
- **Quasi-official spaces:** civic clubs or associations;
- **Third places:** socials, beauty parlors, barber shops, churches;
- **Incidental conversations:** on sidewalks, standing in line at a checkout; and
- **Private spaces:** in the home.



Left to right: Republican leaders Senator Robert Dole, Senator Trent Lott, Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Congressman Bob Livingston.

We believe the material in this guide will give you background material and offer suggestions for civic discourse in all of these arenas.

If you are a parent of a student in high school or in college, your children may be using another form of this guide to foster discussion on the nature of engagement in our democracy. Ask them to bring the discussion home. Share your ideas as a family on these pressing issues.

But most of all, use **The People and the Power Game** and these thoughts for discussion to initiate dialogue.

Program Summary

The Elected: The Presidency and Congress

The Elected: The Presidency and Congress takes the viewer into the world of legislative politics. The United States government was created to decentralize power, to protect the American public from a tyrannical leader as envisioned by our founding fathers, having recently fought to overthrow such tyrannical leadership. Perhaps they did much too good a job.

The federal government is divided into three branches—the executive, the legislative and the judicial. Each branch has powers granted to it by the Constitution, and each branch is able to impose checks and balances on the other two. This system led political scientist Richard Neustadt to describe “a government of separated institutions sharing powers.” Perhaps nowhere more than in the legislative process do we see those “separated institutions” struggling to retain their portion of those shared powers. *The Elected* specifically takes up the executive and the legislative branches and how the deliberative process envisioned by the founding fathers may have turned into gridlock.

Without compromise the newly formed United States of America would not have had the Constitution that we so value today. Complex areas of disagreement separated the framers. Initially, the questions of ending the slave trade, numerical representation, and how the legislative bodies would represent their small and large constituencies were solved by such proposals as the Three-Fifths Compromise and the Great Compromise. Their names say it all. One final argument threatened to split the new nation, the argument over governmental rights versus individual rights. The Bill of Rights solved that controversy.

Is compromise a concession, yielding or pragmatism, a practical way of solving problems? One is seen as defeat, the other practical, realistic. Look again at the words of James Madison, in *The Federalist*, No. 10: “. . . refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium

of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.” Madison expected our elected representatives to look toward compromise to achieve the best response one can hope to achieve given the many viewpoints about how best to govern.



President Clinton.

Many Americans are becoming cynical over what they see as gridlock in our government, the inability to accomplish the most basic of legislative actions. Many had hoped in 1992, with the advent of the first Democratic president in 12 years and a Democratic Congress in place, we would see an end to gridlock and ineffectual government. But as the first segment in *The Elected* shows us, being of the same political party does not guarantee cooperation between the executive branch and Congress.

As a newly elected president, Bill Clinton fell into the arrogance-of-power trap. Perhaps Tom Mann of the Brookings Institute said it best, “I think most presidents, most new presidents, overestimate the power of the office they have just won.” This overestimation of power cost President Clinton the support of conservative and more moderate Democrats in Congress. The President cannot order others to follow. He must lead by persuasion. If that persuasion is lost on Congress, he can turn to the American public as Franklin Roosevelt did, but ultimately it is the Congress that will or will not pass the legislative package a president puts forth.

Bill Clinton won some and lost some, most notably, health care reform, in his earliest attempts at legislative leadership. In the process he drove the Blue Dog Democrats into the arms of the Republicans. The language of another time gave us the name, yellow dog democrat. This was someone who would vote for a Democrat even if it were a yellow dog. The Blue Dogs were born when prominent

Louisiana artist George Rodrigue, famous for his blue dog art inspired by his dog Tiffany, created a painting for his friend, Democrat-now-turned-Republican Jimmy Hayes (R, LA). Hayes was denounced for voting against the Democratic-inspired budget. Rodrigue painted an oil which he titled *The Washington Blue Dog* and wrote a caption saying, "Jimmy Hayes, the Blue Dog Democrat." Hayes supplied blue dog pins for other conservative Democrats. The *Wall Street Journal* picked up on the pins and the designation stuck.

The Republicans, led by Newt Gingrich (R, GA), saw Clinton's mistakes as fatal blunders and set out not only to gain control of Congress but also to shift the center of power. It was this course of action that led to the downfall of Newt Gingrich and the Republican revolution.

Seventy-four freshmen Republican congressmen, inspired by the *Contract with America* and orchestrated by the new Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, moved like a blitzkrieg. They passed all but one component, term limits, of the *Contract with America*. But their never-say-die attitude made them more willing to fight than to compromise, and the public backlash against them and Speaker Gingrich stopped the revolution at the doors of the Senate and the Oval Office.

Compromise is not surrender; it is a pragmatic course of action envisioned by the Constitution's framers to make government operate in a slow and deliberate manner, creating consensus rather than bowing to the capriciousness of any one faction.

The Elected: The Presidency and Congress has the following segments presented in this order:

The Democrats

- Bill Clinton is elected and faces legislative obstacles.
- Senator David Boren (D, OK) defects over the economic package.
- Democrats attempt to police their party after the revolt of the Blue Dogs.
- Health care reform fails.

The Republicans

- Newt Gingrich directs the 1994 Republican election landslide in the House.

- Gingrich is picked as Speaker by newly elected Republican House members. Republican program introduced.
- House freshmen revolt over purging of one of their own. Senate moderates also revolt against discipline.
- The farm subsidy proposal is modified by constituency politics.
- The budget impasse leads to shutdown of the federal government, while Republicans divide. President Clinton wins a round in the budget war.



Above: House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Right: Hedrick Smith and Senator Robert Dole.

Thoughts for Discussion

1. Look at the Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances chart on page 14. Where are these elements at play in **The People and the Power Game**?

2. Given these checks and balances and the layout of the branches, what breed of politician is most likely to generate the best outcomes?

3. Do any events in the news portray the checks and balances at work?

4. What are the inherent weaknesses/strengths of the presidency? Congress?

5. Where should America look for policy leadership, the President, Congress, both, neither?

6. Agree or disagree: the intricacy of the legislative procedure affords vast leverage for those opposed to any piece of legislation.

7. Brainstorm suggestions for reform in the legislative process. Critically examine the list. Which suggested reforms seem to make the most sense? Why?

8. If major reforms were passed in Congress and the legislative process speeded up, would this be desirable?

9. Hedrick Smith discusses the presidential leadership of Franklin Roosevelt during the Depression. How did FDR's activism change the presidency forever?

10. In **The People and the Power Game** the Democratic caucus attempts to bring the Blue Dog Democrats in line on Clinton's economic package and the Republican leadership attempts to punish Mark Neumann and Mark Hatfield's defections. What do these case studies say about party loyalty vs. personal conviction or constituent responsibility?

11. Comment on Congressman Parker's statement, "If you take a yellow dog Democrat and you put your hands around his neck and you squeeze hard enough and he can't breathe, he becomes a blue dog. And if you keep squeezing, he becomes a Republican."

12. Review the historical compromises that gave form to the Constitution—the Three-Fifths Compromise, the Great or Connecticut Compromise, the addition of the Bill of Rights. Analyze the words of James Madison in *The Federalist*, No. 10 as he

clarified the intentions of the framers of the Constitution:

The effect of the first difference is, on the one hand, to refine and enlarge the public views, bypassing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.

Is the spirit of compromise intrinsic to our decentralized three-branch government? What forces are causing this spirit to break down in the legislative process? Is this a recent phenomenon or have we seen it at other times in our nation's history?

13. What sacrifices must politicians make to renew this spirit of compromise? What sacrifices are necessary on the part of the media? Interest groups? Citizens?

14. Congressman Orton said that both the Republican and Democratic parties are controlled by the extreme factions on the political spectrum, but most Americans are centrists. Do you agree or disagree?

15. One suggestion to end *demo-sclerosis* was to elect the president and both houses of Congress for the same term, or to elect Congress after the presidential election, perhaps putting one party in control of both Congress and the presidency. Do you agree with these proposals? What would you suggest?

16. Are political parties "a good thing, a necessary part of bringing some cohesion and direction to our government"?

17. Primaries, conventions, party caucuses—which do you feel have the tendency to foster more public participation?

18. Do you support term limits for Congress? Why or why not? What time frame would you choose if there were a limit?

19. Senator Cohen asked, "How do we restore confidence in our institutions?" Discuss the issue he raised.

20. Read *The Federalist*, No. 10 and *Washington's Farewell Address*. Why did Madison, Washington and others feel so strongly about *factions*? Did any of their predictions come true? Are any of their arguments viable today?

Program Summary

The Unelected: Lobbies and the Media

The Unelected: Lobbies and the Media takes the viewer inside the “shadow government”—the lobbies and the media, who exercise power in the name of the American people and whose performance affects whether the public feels well served by American democracy.

Under the Constitution, formal power is granted to elected officials and those appointed to the executive branch by the president. People complain that this official bureaucracy has become bloated, but actually, the federal government has shrunk during the 1990s by 200,000 employees.

What has been growing rapidly is the unelected power centers of the lobbies and the media. Writer Kevin Philips estimates that the armies of professionals working to influence government policy is far larger than ever and now numbers 60,000 lawyers, 90,000 lobbyists, hundreds of trade associations, labor unions, citizens groups—all pushing their special agendas.

The media, too, is exploding. In the 1930s, the entire White House press corps could fit around the desk of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Today, there are 1,800 reporters, photographers, television producers and other media personnel who are accredited to the White House. In all, 12,000 journalists work in the nation’s capital.

The Media: Its explosive growth has left the mainstream media—the national television networks and the major newspapers—vulnerable to new competition from cable television, talk radio, supermarket tabloids and infotainment shows like “Hard Copy” or “Inside Edition,” which play up entertainment and scandal over factual political news and issue coverage.

The daily challenge is to choose what news to report and how to treat it. Television finds it far easier to cover personalities, scandals and snafus than to explain the complexities of policy, economics, or the inner workings of Congress. Graphic pictures or extremist accusations dominate the newscasts. Sensationalism pushes aside news about the substance of government.

In the relentless race for audience ratings and readership, the mainstream media stands charged with lowering its news standards, with blurring the line between fact and opinion. In this program, news anchors Dan Rather of CBS News and Peter Jennings of ABC News acknowledge their uneasiness at recent episodes and trends, such as the supermarket tabloid allegations against presidential candidate Bill Clinton in 1992. The networks, Dan Rather says, are “right at the brink of being totally overwhelmed and consumed by entertainment values as opposed to news values.”

Conflict is another favorite theme of the press. The conflict between the White House press corps and the presidency epitomizes today’s combative style of journalism and the distrust that has developed between the media and the government since the Vietnam War in the 1960s and the Watergate break-in during the 1972 presidential campaign and the subsequent coverup by President Nixon.

Today, reporters make their careers by exposing official wrongdoing.

That has led to a culture of “gotcha” journalism. Exposés and conflicts are more enticing stories to report than the necessary but less dramatic give-and-take of political compromise.

With apathy rampant among American voters, critics blame the press for feeding public cynicism about



CBS News anchor Dan Rather and Hedrick Smith.

government. People say that the media, by its increasingly negative tone, by turning tabloid, and by treating government as a world of underhanded deals and power plays, has distorted the public agenda and provoked public mistrust—both toward politicians and toward journalists.

The Lobbies: Citizen participation is the essence of democracy. Going to Washington to see your member of Congress is putting the First Amendment into action. It is exercising the constitutional rights of free expression and free assembly. It is petitioning the government—to protect the environment, preserve favorite programs, or rescue the public from higher taxes. Our democracy cannot function without the citizen effort to influence policy debates, what is called lobbying.

But today, lobbying has become a highly sophisticated industry. It is not just folks coming from California, Texas or Pennsylvania to see their senators. It is the professional influence peddlers—lawyers, lobbyists, ad men, telemarketers, public relations firms and grass roots organizers—who often overpower and push aside ordinary citizens.

Great power and influence are exercised by the PACs—Political Action Committees, or the financial arms of special interest groups that put up much of the money for our political campaigns. In fact, lobbying and funding campaigns have become the Siamese twins of American politics, because professional lobbyists have learned that one of the best ways to gain access to politicians is to provide the money that helps them get elected. After the election, the PAC lobbyists have a better



Congressman Tom DeLay (R, TX, Standing).

chance than most ordinary people to sit down with members of Congress to push their pet legislation. The feeling that Washington is dominated by this: “inside money game” has fueled public disillusionment with government and has left many ordinary citizens feeling that they cannot compete with special interests.

The newest wrinkle in lobbying is “the outside game.” This means going over the head of Congress to the country at large with an issue, the way a president does from what Presi-

dent Theodore Roosevelt called “the bully pulpit” of the White House, and then mobilizing public opinion to switch votes in Congress.

In one instance, the insurance industry fought against President Clinton’s proposed reform of the American health care system with a series of television advertisements targeted at the home districts of important members of Congress. These were the “Harry and Louise” ads, showing a man and his wife criticizing the President’s program at their kitchen table.

Another tactic is to spend millions on hiring telemarketers to phone hundreds, even thousands of people. When the people agree with the position of the lobbyist, the telemarketers put their phone calls through to members of Congress to influence their vote. Advocates of this practice defend it as democracy in action. Critics say this is not grass-roots opinion but “Astroturf,” artificially generated opinion. They contend this method distorts democracy because it exaggerates public support of lobbyists’ causes and favors people and organizations rich enough to pay for this high-priced lobbying.

The Unelected: The Media and The Lobbies contains the following segments:

The Media:

- CBS in “the competitive pit.”
- Tabloids turn the mainstream media.
- Newt Gingrich’s rise and fall in the media.
- The rush to judgment—instant analysis.
- The people vs. the media: issues vs. inside baseball.
- CBS: Getting back in touch.

The Lobbies:

- The money game: bucks and beliefs.
- Tom DeLay and U.P.S. vs. OSHA.
- Stealing the bully pulpit: Harry and Louise.
- The First Amendment in action.
- Tobacco and the money game.
- Smokescreen lobbying.
- “Astroturf”—artificial grassroots.

Thoughts for Discussion

1. Do the actions of political parties differ from what interest groups do?

2. Would stronger political parties decrease the need for interest groups (lobbyists)?

3. Why might a Democrat want to “convert” to a Republican?

4. How do government agencies act as interest groups? Why might they need to?

5. What do you believe is the relationship between active government involvement and interest group formation? Why?

6. What social trends and changes in contemporary America have the potential to stimulate an interest group formation?

7. How can interest groups help facilitate the legislative process?

8. Which tactics might interest groups use to influence Congress? Which tactics would be the most/least effective? What, if any, restrictions would you place on interest groups?

9. It has been suggested the media is most effective in affecting *how* politics are conducted. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

10. Look at television, radio, newspaper, periodical and, if available, online services’ reports on a particular topic. Compare the language, slant, place in the overall news, and amount of coverage. Do any overall patterns emerge? Rate the various media sources as to bias in reporting or political leanings.

11. Programming choices made by the electronic media unduly influence the public agenda. Agree or disagree?

12. Review the basic provisions of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974 (see page 12). How has this law impacted on the power of political parties?

13. What kinds of power do you have available for action in the

political arena? What kinds of power would you like to see citizens acquire?

14. What do you want from government? What is government capable of delivering?

15. How much influence do you think a PAC would have over a member of Congress? How can creating a PAC be beneficial to small businesses and associations? What changes to the rules governing PACs would you propose?

15. Forum participants proposed various methods for funding elections. With which proposals do you agree?

16. Ellen Miller of the Center for Responsive Politics cites some interesting figures: Less than 1/3 of 1 percent of the population gives \$200 or more to a candidate; business interests give seven times more than labor; and energy interests out-spend environmental concerns by 10 to 1. A forum member responded with the question, “How can you get democracy to work in that context?”

17. Senator Bradley said the Supreme Court ruled [*Buckley v. Valeo* (1976)] that a wealthy man’s pocketbook (money) can obtain public exposure for him in the same manner public exposure can be obtained freely by a poor man on a “soapbox.” Do you agree?

18. “Do you trust the press?” What grade would you give the press?

19. Can you name the Three Stooges? Name three justices of the Supreme Court.

20. Do Americans have responsibilities as well as rights?

21. Could the practice of civic journalism attack public cynicism? What other tactics might reduce cynicism?

22. Hedrick Smith said, “American democracy will not work better unless all of us get engaged and try to make it work better ourselves.” What can you do to begin to make American democracy work better?



Senator William Bradley (D, NJ).

The People in the Programs

(Identified by their status as of May 1996)

The Elected: The Presidency and Congress

White House Officials

LEON PANETTA White House Chief of Staff, Clinton Administration
GEORGE Senior White House Advisor, Clinton Administration
STEPHANOPOULOS Clinton Administration
DEE DEE Former White House Press Secretary, Clinton Administration
MYERS Clinton Administration
DAVID GERGEN Former White House Counselor, Clinton Administration and Republican Presidents Nixon, Ford and Reagan
HOWARD Former White House Congressional Liaison, Clinton Administration
PASTER

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DAVID OBEY Congressman, WI 7th Dist.
JOHN DINGELL Congressman, MI 16th Dist., former chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee
LESLIE BYRNE Former Congresswoman, VA 11th Dist.
DAN Former Congressman, IL; former chair,
ROSTENKOWSKI House Ways & Means Committee

Democrats/Party Rebels:

Blue Dogs and Lone Rangers

MIKE PARKER Congressman, Democrat who switched to Republican, MS 4th Dist.
CHARLES Congressman, TX 17th Dist.
STENHOLM
GARY CONDIT Congressman, CA 18th Dist.
DAVID BOREN Former Senator, OK
JIM COOPER Former Congressman, TN, introduced Cooper Health Care Plan

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NEWT GINGRICH Congressman, GA 6th Dist.,
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MARK SOUDER Congressman, IN 4th Dist.

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BOB LIVINGSTON Congressman, LA 1st Dist.,
Chair, Appropriations Committee
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The Unelected: Lobbies and the Media

Broadcast Media

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Evening News
ANDREW President, CBS News
HEYWARD
JEFF FAGER Executive Producer, CBS Evening News
ERIC ENGBERG Correspondent, CBS News

JERRY NACHMAN Vice President, News, WCBS-TV,
CBS Affiliate, New York City
PETER JENNINGS Anchor, ABC World News Tonight
JEFF GREENFIELD Correspondent, ABC News
BRIT HUME White House Correspondent,
ABC News
GAIL BENDING WJZ News Director, Baltimore

Print Media

PAUL STAROBIN Reporter, *National Journal*
DAN MORAIN Reporter, *Los Angeles Times*
PAUL TAYLOR Former Reporter, *Washington Post*
JEFFERY BIRNBAUM *Time Magazine* Correspondent

Media Commentators

MANDY GRUNWALD Former Clinton Media Advisor
THOMAS PATTERSON Professor, Syracuse U.
TOM ROSENSTIEL Media critic, *Newsweek*
MARVIN KALB Media Analyst

Lobbyists and Industry Spokespeople

ROBERT RUSBULT Vice Pres., Federal Affairs for Independent Insurance Agents of America
JOHN MOTLEY Lobbyist, Nat'l Retail Federation
NEYSA SOMPLE Lobbyist, OH, anti-smoking interest group
JANET STUDER Lobbyist, OH, anti-smoking interest group
MICHAEL PERTSCHUK Co-director, Advocacy Institute, an organization supporting other non-profits' advocacy efforts
LISA FRENICKS Lobbyist, OH, anti-smoking interest group
DAVID REHR Lobbyist, Nat'l Beer Wholesalers Assn.
BRUCE GATES Lobbyist, Wholesale Grocers Assn.
WILLIS GRADISON President
JACK BONNER President, Bonner and Associates

MIKE MALIK President, Triad Communications
BEN GODDARD Media consultant to lobbyists, responsible for the "Harry and Louise" advertising campaign
CHARLES BLIXT Senior Vice Pres., R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
LAURIE BAULIG American Trucking Assn.

Congresspeople

TOM DELAY Congressman, Republican, TX 22nd Dist., Majority Whip
HENRY WAXMAN Congressman, Democrat, CA 29th Dist.
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JOHN BOEHNER Congressman, OH 8th Dist., Republican Conference
STEVE LARGENT Congressman, Republican, OK 1st Dist.

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MIKE MCCURRY White House Press Secretary, Clinton Administration
GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS Senior White House Advisor, Clinton Administration

Commentators

ELLEN MILLER Executive Director, Center for Responsive Politics
CHARLES LEWIS Executive Director, Center for Public Integrity, a non-profit watchdog organization
KEVIN PHILLIPS Author, political analyst

VOTERS' FORUM PANEL

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Media and Media Reformers

CHRIS BURY ABC News **Nightline**
ED FOUHY Director, Pew Center for Civic Journalism
KENNETH T. WALSH White House correspondent, *U.S. News & World Report*



Lobbyists and Specialists on Campaign Finance

AARON BELK Executive Asst. to President of Teamsters Union
ELLEN MILLER Director, Center for Responsive Politics
DAVID REHR Vice President, Nat'l Beer Wholesalers Assn.

Kenneth T. Walsh, White House correspondent for U.S. News & World Report.

Referenced Information

Blue Dogs: A yellow-dog Democrat was someone who would vote for a Democrat even if it were a yellow dog. The Blue Dogs were born when prominent Louisiana artist George Rodrigue, famous for his blue paintings of his dog Tiffany, created a painting for his friend, Democrat-now-turned-Republican Jimmy Hayes (R, LA). Hayes was denounced for voting against the Democratic inspired budget. Rodrigue painted an oil which he titled *The Washington Blue Dog*, with a caption that read, "Jimmy Hayes, the Blue Dog Democrat." Hayes had blue dog pins made for other conservative Democrats. The *Wall Street Journal* picked up on the pins and the designation stuck.

Bully Pulpit: President Teddy Roosevelt said the presidency was a *bully pulpit*, describing it as an excellent medium for the communication of ideas.

California Proposition 188 Statewide Smoking/Tobacco Regulation

- Repeal and preempt local smoking and tobacco regulations.
- Repeal and replace existing statewide smoking and tobacco regulations.
- Permit amendment of tobacco regulations by two-thirds vote of Legislature.
- Ban public smoking with significant exceptions.
- Permit smoking sections in restaurants and employee cafeterias with conditions.
- Bars not regulated.
- Permit smoking in private offices and business conference rooms with occupants' consent.
- Exempt from smoking regulations gaming clubs, bingo establishments, racetracks, sports facility private boxes and smoking lounges.
- Regulate location of tobacco vending machines and billboards.
- Increase penalties for tobacco purchases by minors.

Democratic Leadership Council: The DLC is an organization of centrist and conservative Democrats formed in 1985. The founders, mostly Southern Democrats, wanted to counter the policies of the more liberal wing of the Democratic party and Republican presidential victories. A primary goal of the DLC was to reclaim the center of the political spectrum, thereby making Democratic presidential candidates more viable contenders. David Boren, Jim Cooper and many political *Blue Dogs* have been members. Bill Clinton is a former chairman.

Demo-sclerosis: Term coined to describe the sluggish behavior of politics in democracy. The term is

a play on arterial-sclerosis or hardening of the arteries, as Hedrick Smith noted.

Freedom to Farm Act of 1995: Among other provisions, this bill established annual and aggregate limits on commodity credits for farm and export expenditures through the crop year 2002 and created the Commission on 21st Century Production Agriculture to assess the current and future condition of U.S. agriculture, including the appropriate agricultural role of the government. President Clinton signed this bill into law in April 1996.

Health Security Act: This plan from the Clinton administration to achieve universal health insurance coverage through improved access to standardized and affordable health plans failed to pass Congress.

Managed Competition Act of 1993: The general objective of this bill, also known as the Cooper Health Care Plan, was to reform the health care marketplace to provide universal access to care through competitive health plans. Another specific objective of this bill was to lower the rate of increase in health care costs by the year 2000 to equal the rate of increase in costs in the economy as a whole. This bill failed to pass.



Senator David Boren (D, OK) with Hedrick Smith.



Left: ABC News correspondent Brit Hume with Hedrick Smith in the White House press room. Above: ABC anchor Peter Jennings.

Oligarchy: Governing by a few.

Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993:

Clinton’s 1993 economic plan, which passed by one vote in the Senate and was signed into law in August 1993. Three key elements of the act were an economic stimulus to create jobs; long-term public investments to increase productivity; and a deficit-reduction plan. The plan’s goal was to reduce the deficit by close to \$500 billion over five years. The blueprint involved spending cuts, particularly in the areas of defense and Medicare, and tax increases.

Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996:

Signed in April 1996, this act finished financing scores of federal agencies for the remainder of the 1996 fiscal year,

ending a 16-month impasse. The budget was cut by \$20 billion from 1995 levels, but the reductions came strictly from annually approved domestic programs and not from the Medicare and Medicaid programs originally targeted.

Seven-Year Balanced Budget Reconciliation Act of 1995:

Passed by Congress in November 1995 and vetoed by President Clinton, this package aimed to balance the federal budget by the year 2002—by cutting \$245 billion in taxes over seven years; reducing spending on Medicare, welfare and Medicaid benefits; reducing subsidies to farmers; and cutting back or eliminating hundreds of federal programs.

Symbiotic relationship: Two or more entities existing in a close, usually beneficial relationship.

1974 Federal Election Campaign Act—CONTRIBUTION LIMITS

Candidates for Congress can spend as much money as they can raise, whether from their own pockets or from those of contributors. No spending

limits apply. Contributors to federal campaigns, on the other hand, do face limits in what they can give to a federal candidate or a national political party.

Federal Campaign Spending Limits				
Gifts	To any candidate or Candidate Committee	To any National Party Committee Political	To any PAC or Other Committee	Total
Time Period	Per Election	Per Calendar Year	Per Calendar Year	Per Calendar Year
Individual	\$1,000	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$25,000
Multi-candidate Committee	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$5,000	No Limit
Other Political Committee	\$1,000	\$20,000	\$5,000	No Limit

SOURCE: Federal Election Commission

The Supreme Court ruled, in *Federal Election Comm’n v. National Conservatives PAC* (1985), that PACs can spend unlimited amounts on behalf of a candidate or

an issue. Also, contributions channeled to a state party committee or state-registered PAC are not regulated by federal law.

Republican Contract with America

These 10 bills were the legislative centerpiece of political actions and legislation proposed by Republican candidates running for Congress in 1994. Items followed by an asterisk (*) had been signed into law as of May 1996.

1. Fiscal Responsibility Act

- Amend Constitution to require a balanced budget
- Give president a line item veto*

2. Taking Back Our Streets Act

- Require restitution to victims
- Increase grants for prison construction
- Speed deportation of criminal aliens
- Create community, anti-crime block grants
- Limit death row appeals

3. Personal Responsibility Act

- Create state welfare block grants
- End automatic welfare eligibility
- Cap welfare spending
- Establish lifetime, five-year benefits cap
- Require work after two years of benefits

4. Family Reinforcement Act

- Require parental consent to survey children
- Provide tax credits for adoption and elderly home care
- Increase penalties for sex crimes against children
- Strengthen enforcement of child support orders

5. American Dream Restoration Act

- Institute a \$500 per child tax credit
- Ease jointly-filed tax return *marriage penalty*
- Expand IRA savings account plans

6. National Security Restoration Act

- Prohibit US troops in UN missions under foreign command
- Prohibit defense cuts to finance social programs
- Develop a missile defense system
- Cut funding for UN peacekeeping missions

7. Senior Citizens' Equity Act

- Repeal 1993 increase in taxable Social Security Benefits
- Permit \$30,000 of earned income without loss of Social Security benefits
- Tax credit for long-term care insurance purchase

8. Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act

- Cut capital gains tax rate and accelerate depreciation
- Reduce unfunded mandates*
- Reduce paperwork*
- Require federal agencies to assess risks, use cost-benefit analysis, reduce paperwork and reimburse property owners for value loss due to regulations

9. Common Sense Legal Reforms Act

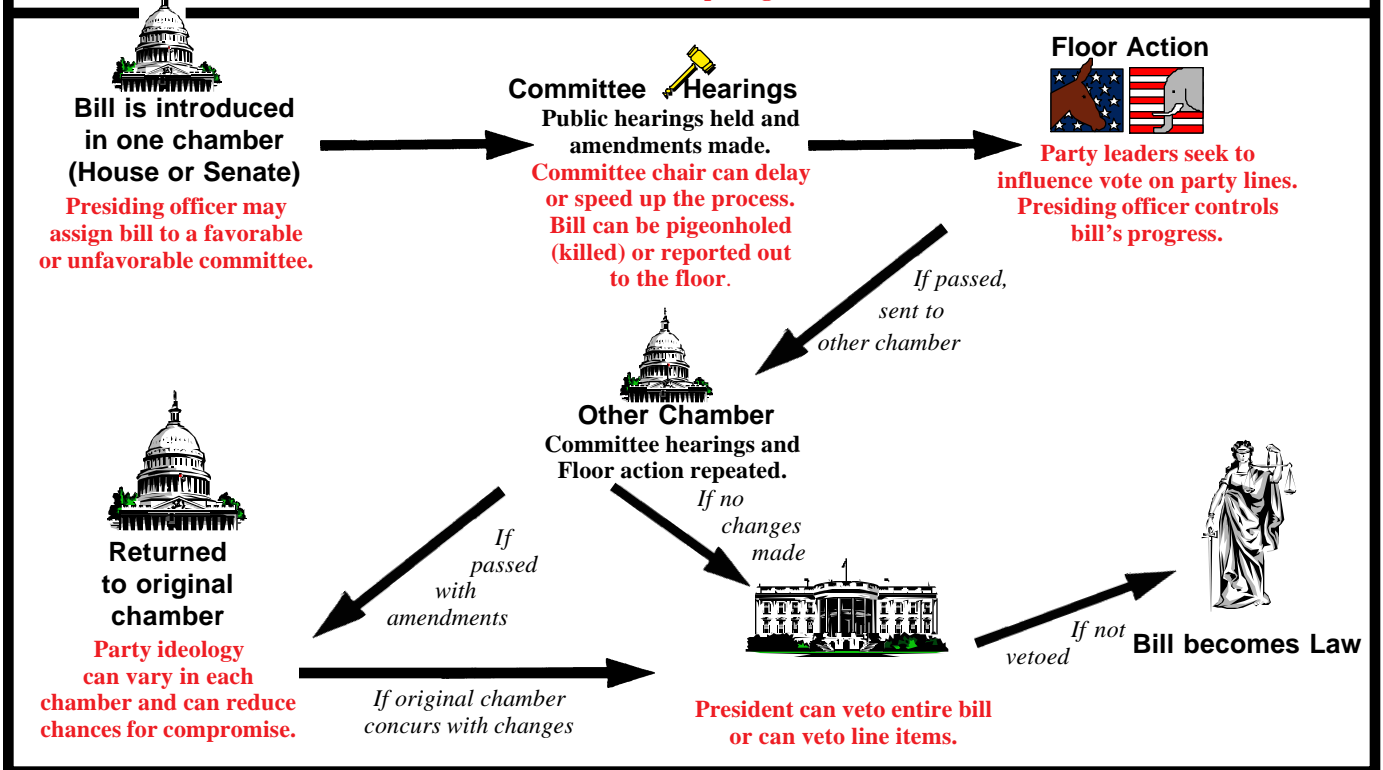
- Enact national product liability law with punitive damage limits
- Make investor lawsuits more difficult
- Apply *loser pays* rule to certain federal cases

10. Citizen Legislature Act




- Enact congressional term limit amendment

How a Bill Becomes Law

(With obstacles to passage in red)



Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances

 Executive Branch	 Legislative Branch	 Judicial Branch
President	Congress	Courts
Powers	Powers	Powers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce, propose and veto laws • Prepare U.S. budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make laws • Can override a veto • Control appropriations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicial review of laws and executive actions • Interpret laws and treaties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct foreign policy and make treaties • Command armed forces • Appoint federal judges, Cabinet members, ambassadors and other federal officials • May grant pardons and reprieves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve treaties • Declare war • Raise and support armed forces • Approve appointments • Impeach and judge federal officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret treaties
Checks	Checks	Checks
Legislative Judicial	Executive Judicial	Executive Legislative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veto laws • Call special sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Override veto • Impeach federal officials • Control money • Confirm treaties and appointments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret laws
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint judges • Grant pardons and reprieves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impeach judges • Approve appointments • Propose amendments • Establish lower courts • Change size of court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide constitutionality of laws



Hedrick Smith leads Voters' Forum discussion.

Citizen Involvement: What can one person do?

1. The constitutional disbursement of power offers numerous opportunities for citizens to get involved in the political system. Form groups to influence politics and strengthen political parties. Volunteer in a political campaign.

2. We will have more effective legislators when we become more effective citizens. Become a more effective citizen by keeping informed on local issues and investigating records of officeholders. Records of Congressional votes can be obtained from many sources. On the Internet, try:
Rate Your Rep - http://voter96.cqalert.com.cq_rate.htm
Vote Watch - <http://pathfinder.com/cq>
Project Vote Smart - <http://www.oclc.org/VoteSmart/lwv/lwvsmrt1.htm>, also reached by phone at (800) 622-7627.

3. Call and leave messages for members of Congress concerning pending legislation or Congressional action. The number is (202) 224-3121.

4. Promote a voter registration campaign.

5. Join an interest group.

6. Read *Ralph Nader Presents a Citizen's Guide to Lobbying* (New York: Dembner Books, 1983).

7. Involve yourself in election reform. Contact:

League of Women Voters of the United States

1730 Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC
20036
(202) 429-1965

**Center for
Responsive Politics**

1320 19th Street, NW,
Suite M-1
Washington, DC
20036
(202) 857-0044

Honest Ballot Assn.

272-30 Grand
Central Parkway
Floral Park, NY
11005
(516) 466-4100

8. Broaden your horizons, test your opinions: Read periodicals from various political persuasions.

9. Suggest policies public officials could adopt to increase the notion of political effectiveness.

10. What's in it for me? Identify elements of political participation that can help one achieve personal goals, i.e., safety from crime and hazardous products, economic security, a clean environment, healthy economy, good education.

11. Outline actions to increase your civic participation and reach your personal goals.

12. Keep up with and stay informed about issues. The House Document Room distributes House bills, resolutions, reports, documents and public laws for the 104th Congress. House reports, documents and public laws for the 103rd Congress are also maintained. To order copies, call the Document Room at (202) 225-3456, Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Include your telephone number and mailing address. To write for copies, the address is:

House Document Room, Rm. B18
Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The e-mail address is:

hdocs@hr.house.gov.

Send an e-mail to

househelp@hr.house.gov

for help in getting electronic information.

13. Let the parties that run Congress know your feelings or ask them a question.

Democratic Policy
Committee (automated
server): **info@dpc.
senate.gov**
(Subject = "Help")

**postmaster@dpc.senate.
gov** (comments and
questions)

Republican Policy
Committee: **webmaster
@rpc.senate.gov**

14. Look at the Citizen's
Guide to the Federal
Budget: **http://www.
doc.gov/BudgetFY97/
guidetoc.html**



*Congressman Christopher Shays (R, CT, left front)
at Voters' Forum.*

Suggested Readings

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Senator William Cohen (R, ME, center front) with Voters' Forum participants.

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Citizen's Handbook:	http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/html/handbook.html
Publications from the White House:	http://www1.ai.mit.edu/publications.html
Reinventing Government:	http://www.npr.gov
Office of Management and Budget:	http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OMB/html/ombhome.html
U.S. House of Representatives:	http://www.house.gov
U.S. Senate:	http://www.senate.gov
The Jefferson Project:	http://www.voxpop.org/jefferson
Project Vote Smart:	http://www.oclc.org/VoteSmart
The People and the Power Game	http://www.pbs.org/powergame

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