



MAKING DEMOCRACY SAFER FOR GOVERNING

IN face of the permanent pressures sustaining the permanent campaign, we should not expect to find any reforms that could completely insulate governing from campaigning. Nor should we want such a sharp separation between the two. In a democracy, politicians care about reelection while they are governing, not only while they are campaigning. Also, to win support for their legislative proposals, they often need to use many of the tools of campaigning (direct appeals to voters, town meetings, barnstorming, and the like). In a divided government, going directly to the voters may be the only way to break a legislative stalemate. When legislators are intransigent, leaders can turn to the voters. They can campaign for compromise.

We should try to find some reforms that could protect the capacity to govern, making democracy safer for governing, without completely suppressing the impulse to campaign while in office. Although campaigning cannot be banished from governing, its influence can be restrained. [W]e suggest ways that several practices in government, elections, and the media might be modified to make more scope for governing.

Space for Governing. In January 2011, Mark Udall, Democratic senator from Colorado, proposed that each member of Congress sit with a colleague from the other party at the State of the Union Address. Some 150 members ultimately paired off with colleagues from the other party. No one expected what some members called “date night” to result in a sudden resurgence of bipartisan cooperation. And of course it did not. But as a symbolic act, which was what Udall intended, it succeeded in dramatizing the message that in a legislature individual

Even the best-intentioned politicians can find themselves distracted from the public interest by factors ranging from the continual demands of fundraising, to the expectations of

Excerpt

supporters and activists, to an often cynical, “horse-race” obsessed media. But even in the era of the permanent campaign, there are ways to foster an environment more conducive to governing, say the authors of *The Spirit of Compromise: Why Governing Demands It and Campaigning Undermines It* in this essay adapted from the book.

BY AMY GUTMANN AND DENNIS THOMPSON

interactions are necessary for collective achievements. Proximity facilitates collegiality: legislators who sit together work together better. Institutional geography matters.

The implications of this message can be extended to more consequential proposals. When Newt Gingrich became Speaker in 1995, he told freshman Republicans that they should not move their families to Washington. He wanted them to spend more time campaigning in their districts. As Representative Jim Cooper remembers, “soon everyone belonged to the Tuesday-Thursday Club. Members became strangers, the easier for them to fight.” The pattern persists today in even more exaggerated form.

To encourage more sustained interaction, veteran congressional observer Norm Ornstein proposes that Congress change its schedule—three weeks on, one week off. During the three-week period, Congress would be in session from nine to five, Monday through Friday.

When adversaries know each other well, [t]hey are less likely to act as players in the classic bargaining game who hold out for their maximum individual payoff, producing an outcome that makes both sides worse off. In longer term relationships, legislators have a better sense of their colleagues’ intentions,

their trustworthiness, and the political constraints they are facing—and their colleagues know that they do. They are repeat players. That enables all to make more confident judgments about when to compromise and when not to.

Another recommendation would create some safe harbors for bipartisanship by partitioning parts of the legislative process—subjecting some to procedural rules that are more conducive to cooperation. Representative David Price, a Democrat from North Carolina and one of the few political scientists in Congress, urges movement in the direction of the “restrained partisanship that has historically characterized committee operations.” He points out that legislators of both parties share the responsibility for holding the executive branch accountable—the constitutional power of the purse. That institutional role “should be distinct from jockeying for partisan advantage within Congress.” Campaigning tactics on the floor of the House could remain the same on many other issues, but for appropriations Price recommends tightening procedures in order to restore a more accommodating mode on the floor as well as in committee.

For similar reasons, congressional investigations, ethics proceedings, and criminal referrals should be more effectively protected from blatantly partisan attempts to use them to stockpile political fodder for the next campaign. Letting the independent counsel statute expire in 1999 was a step in the right direction, enabling the process of special investigations to be more publicly accountable through the Justice Department. Nothing can entirely substitute, however, for some modicum of self-restraint on the part of partisan public officials.

Democratic theorists as well as democratic citizens recognize that it is important to preserve ample space for opposition in government. A robust opposition serves to keep the ruling party honest, provides an outlet for dissent, and helps a current minority to accept laws they otherwise oppose. The government endures and parties cooperate in part because the majority knows that it could find itself in the minority in the future. In the United States Senate, however, this logic has been carried to an extreme. Supermajority rules and customs, notably the filibuster, protect the minority so well that the majority will is often completely thwarted. Nearly all legislation and most confirmations in effect now require 60 votes. The use of the filibuster has grown steadily and dramatically—from affecting about 8 percent of major measures annually in the 1960s to 70 percent in recent years. At the same time, the use of still more problematic tactics of obstruction, such as the holds that individual senators place on nominations, has sharply increased.

The way the filibuster has evolved shows that supermajority rules—far from being necessary or sufficient for compromise—routinely thwart it. It may be true that under such rules the parties must compromise if any action is to be taken. But notice the “if.” The alternative—no action—is more likely. When no action is taken, the resulting political stalemate blocks improvements over the status quo just as surely as if the uncompromising mindset had prevailed without any threat of a filibuster.

Yet the filibuster is likely to survive—either because majorities will not be able to abolish it or because both majority and minority parties find it in their interest to keep it. But it is not obviously in the public’s interest. Rather than celebrating

the filibuster’s preservation, we need to look for ways of increasing the chances that it will be used for compromises more attuned to governing rather than campaigning. The chances will be greater to the extent that the compromising mindset is more generally encouraged in the legislature.

We have concentrated on making space for governing in the legislative branch, where campaigning is very much on members’ minds. But presidents and their advisers think about the next election too—and how much they do so partly depends on the institutional locus of their thinking. President Jimmy Carter established what would become the Office of Political Affairs in the White House (OPA), which has “come to represent the centralization of electoral politics in the White House,” [as the presidential scholar Kathryn Dunn Tenpas has noted.] Its influence on governing reached a peak in the second term of the Bush administration. According to an investigation by the Office of Special Counsel, the OPA’s activities led to numerous violations of the Hatch Act, which prohibits most federal employees from engaging in partisan political activity. Among its several recommendations that could help keep campaigning at bay, the Special Counsel report urged Congress to abolish the OPA. Obama closed the OPA when he moved his campaign operation to Chicago to prepare for the 2012 election, but Congress has left the door open for future presidents to resurrect the political operation in the White House.

[Richard W. Painter, a former associate counsel to President George W. Bush,] reflecting on his experience when Karl Rove headed the Office of Political Affairs, would go further. He favors rules that would prohibit all White House staff members from “engaging in personal capacity political activity” and would ban “any political activity on government property, whether in the White House or anywhere else.”

To pursue these and other efforts at protecting the space for governing would be to carry on the struggle begun as early as the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. As one of his first acts in office, he requested that the heads of executive departments order employees “not [to] attempt to influence the votes of others nor take any part in the business of electioneering, that being deemed inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution and [the employees’] duties to it.”

Term Time. [T]erm limits, whatever their other merits, are unlikely to promote compromising mindsets conducive to governing. They are more likely to have the opposite effect. The main reason we have already noted: mutual respect necessary for compromise depends on collegial relationships that take time to cultivate. The frequent turnover caused by term limits reduces the opportunities for trust-building interactions and disrupts those that do happen to develop.

Rather than limiting the number of terms, increasing their length would be a more effective way to give legislators more time to govern between campaigns. Some reformers and some politicians have long favored lengthening the terms of representatives, senators, and even the president. Lyndon Johnson proposed the longer terms in his State of the Union address in 1966. Since then, several resolutions favoring longer terms

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INVASION OF THE PERMANENT CAMPAIGN: A Q&A WITH AMY GUTMANN

“I reject the word.” That sentence—uttered by incoming House Speaker John Boehner in December 2010 after Lesley Stahl of *60 Minutes* pressed him to characterize the work of governing as an effort to reach some sort of *compromise*—neatly sums up the prevailing attitude toward the concept in many political circles. Once regarded as perhaps the defining characteristic of American democracy—championed above all by none other than Benjamin Franklin at the Constitutional Convention—and with rare exceptions the only way anything has ever gotten done in this country, compromise these days “increasingly sounds like a dirty word in Washington,” says Penn President Amy Gutmann. That development has dire implications for the effective functioning of government, whether liberal or conservative.

In their new book, *The Spirit of Compromise: Why Governing Demands It and Campaigning Undermines It* (Princeton University Press, 2012; \$24.95), Gutmann and her coauthor, Dennis Thompson, the Alfred North Whitehead Professor of Political Philosophy at Harvard, analyze the factors that have led to the decline of compromise, describe the mindsets that foster or thwart reaching such agreements, and offer some thoughts on practical measures that could help revive the concept.

This is the third book that Penn’s chief executive—who is also the Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Political Science—and Thompson have written together, after *Why Deliberative Democracy?* and *Democracy and Disagreement*; they’ve also co-edited *Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments*. *The Spirit of Compromise* is “a natural outgrowth of our previous work on democracy and addressing the puzzle of how democracy can deal with disagreement in society,” says Gutmann. “It’s also an outgrowth of real concern about the inability of contemporary American democracy, in particular of our Congress, to get beyond gridlock, polarization, and permanent campaigning for office.”

The “permanent campaign,” as Gutmann and Thompson describe it, represents a continuation of attitudes and tactics appropriate to elections into the sphere of governing, to the point that it threatens to take over, “like an invasive species,” in Gutmann’s words. It is aided and abetted by increasing polarization within the parties, the injection of vast quantities of money into the political process, and a media that views every issue through the lens of winners and losers and operates voraciously around the clock. As a result, the permanent campaign has steadily encroached on the territory of government,

poisoning an environment in which earlier partisan champions (think Ronald Reagan and Tip O’Neill in the Tax Reform Act of 1986, or Ted Kennedy and Orrin Hatch in healthcare, HIV/AIDS treatment, and disabilities issues) could nevertheless craft agreements in which their parties both gained and lost ground, but which—crucially—“moved the country forward,” says Gutmann.

But despite the current prevalence of attitudes like Boehner’s (which are not limited, the authors note, to the GOP), Gutmann and Thompson haven’t given up on compromise yet. In “Making Democracy Safer for Governing” (page 29), they lay out several actions that could help create conditions more conducive to the compromising spirit.

Gutmann also spoke with *Gazette* editor John Prendergast about the book. What follows is an edited version of that conversation.

What’s the difference between what you call a “classic compromise” and the much more popular “finding common ground”?

Everybody loves “common ground,” whereas “compromise” sounds increasingly like a dirty word in Washington. But strictly speaking, there’s a significant difference. There are common-ground compromises where we find the intersection of our interests, and we agree on them, and we put aside all of our differences. Those are very rare. As we say in the book, the common ground is increasingly barren in a polarized society. And then there are the classic compromises, which were created for situations where people strongly disagree, but both have something to gain by coming to some agreement. And they gain something by coming to an agreement, and they sacrifice something, not just abstractly, but to their political opponents.

So in the current context, the Simpson-Bowles Commission Report, or some version of that, enacted into law, would be a classic compromise. Democrats give up spending on social programs that many of them strongly favor, and Republicans give to Democrats the ability to increase revenues for government, something they don’t like. But both of them get things that they dearly prize, including being able to continue to have a fiscally sound government and fiscally sound society.

You make an interesting point that a good classic compromise is often internally incoherent.

Compromise, depending on the situation, can have a very negative or very positive connotation. And if you're in a situation, which we are increasingly in, in which the alternative to sitting down and compromising with one's political opponents is having America go off a fiscal cliff, compromise doesn't sound so bad. It sounds like a virtue. However, the reason you never want to compromise unless the alternative is worse is because they tend to be internally incoherent. And they tend to leave people, especially people who are avid ideologues, with a sense of surrender to your opponents.

The Reagan Tax Reform Act was a classic compromise between strong Republican partisans like Ronald Reagan, strong Democrat partisans like [House Speaker] Tip O'Neill. By the way, there was no love lost between them, but they did respect one another, and they did have relationships, as did [Democrat] Dan Rostenkowski [chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee] and [Republican] Bob Packwood [chair of the Senate Finance Committee] and Bill Bradley [the Democratic senator who was the original sponsor of the bill in that chamber]. They had relationships in Congress, between the executive branch and Congress. And they were able to craft the largest and most significant tax-reform act in a century, and it moved this country forward. Is it internally coherent to lower tax rates on the rich but increase the percentage of taxes that the rich pay, close loopholes but lower tax rates? Many economists charged incoherence. But it really made a difference to the fiscal health of this country, and it simplified the tax code, and then of course politics as usual came about and started undoing some of the reforms.

But it was a major step forward, as were the reforms, which were compromises, that [Senators] Ted Kennedy and Orrin Hatch sat down—again because they had relationships—and put together. I think those are also great examples because two very strong partisans improved healthcare for children, improved care for victims of AIDS, improved the safety net for Americans with disabilities, and continued to argue for more of what they were most passionately in favor of. So even though compromises are internally often incoherent, they still permit the politicians who craft them to rightly claim

victory for their side, and also to continue to push for those principles that they care most about. In Ted Kennedy's case, universal healthcare. He never lived to achieve it, but he never ceased to advocate for it, even as he made compromises.

You also talk a little bit about the limits of compromise.

Not every compromise is a good one. And it's impossible to draw principled lines around what's good and what's not good because that would be an obstacle to a good compromise. On the other hand, our principles guide us in the direction that we need compromise to go. If a compromise does not improve over the status quo from your perspective and mine and we're the parties to it, then we shouldn't compromise. And if it's good from my perspective and not yours, and you agree, then you're capitulating. So there are many criteria we give in the book that help you distinguish between good and bad compromises. But that's not the purpose of the book.

The purpose of the book is to demonstrate that it is a hopeless mission to try to drive a lot of principled stakes in the ground as to when compromise is good or bad. It's extremely contextual, and it requires all parties to use their judgment in moving compromises forward or not. However, the larger message is, if everything that your opponents in politics stand for is something you are adamantly against on principle, you're also against the way democracy in America works to help people live better lives. Apart from a few very unusual situations when one party, as in the case of FDR, controlled both houses of Congress and the presidency in a filibuster-proof way, there have not been many times, and no times in recent history, where one party could govern without compromise.

Can you describe compromising and uncompromising mindsets?

What we're seeing in American politics is a series of vivid illustrations of the uncompromising mindset. You stand tenaciously on principle; and you're out to defeat, if not demonize, your opponent. And that appears to work very well in campaigns. It is the polar opposite of what works in governing, especially in governing in a non-parliamentary democracy, the kind of democracy we have. In governing, what works is what we call the "com-

promising mindset," which is you respect your opponents, and you adjust your principles. You use principles, not as roadblocks, but as guideposts to direct how you're going to try to govern.

Those are two distinct mindsets, but one of the remarkable features of politics and politicians is that they're generally, outside of the permanent campaign, [not only] more than capable, but eager to mix them. The reason we elect politicians is not so they can run for office again the day after we elect them, but so they can govern in our interests. And in order to govern, you have to have a compromising mindset.

Most politicians traditionally have been attracted to office because they like to exercise power in governing. It is a malady of our politics today to have politicians who are elected so they can get the connections in Washington and then leave office and use their former connections to become lobbyists and make money outside of politics. That kind of revolving door is a symptom of the permanent campaign, and it's very detrimental to governing.

That idea of a permanent campaign seems to be the key to much of what is problematic about our current politics.

The permanent campaign connects many of the most serious problems in our contemporary political life. So what has created the permanent campaign? And what are its manifestations? Among them are a 24/7 news cycle with extremely narrow horserace coverage—because that's cheap and easy to report on. It's not reporting; it's just repetition. The horses are on steroids, and the steroids are funded by unlimited amounts of money coming into politics. And the need for continual fundraising and campaigning means the disappearance of relationships among legislators across the aisle.

Polarization is another important part of this puzzle, and it is, if not created, exacerbated by the permanent campaign because the uncompromising mindset finds its natural habitat in campaigning, and standing on principle and demonizing your opponent increases polarization. Indeed, without the permanent campaign, it would be far, far more natural and easy for polarized politicians to craft compromises. We address the problem of the permanent campaign because, unless voters see what the problem is, it's all too

easy to be taken in by the rhetoric of campaigning. It's high-minded. It's very simple and flashy and unsubtle.

The book recounts several Congressional battles, involving both successful compromises and failed opportunities. In writing about the crisis over raising the debt ceiling in 2011, which led to the formation of the so-called super committee, you describe that as a "shameful process."

What was so bad about that in particular?

It was the process and what it showed about the dysfunctionality of Congress that was so shameful, not the super committee per se. But the super committee failed to use its super powers. And that demonstrated how supreme the uncompromising mindset had become, even at a time when the country needed, and the vast majority of Americans—including the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans—wanted a compromise between two extremes.

The agreement was that all the super committee would have to do is have a majority vote for a compromise, and all of the normal blockage rules of the Congress would be suspended. Simple majority, no amendments, no filibuster. It would have gone through. And yet they couldn't do it. And they couldn't do it because not one member of that committee would cross strong partisan lines, even though by the lights of the majority of their constituents on both sides, this country sorely needed a compromise to move us forward.

Had one member been able to do that, had there been a John Roberts of the super committee, that person and the committee would have gone down as winning glory in American politics. So just as the super committee failed to use its super powers, and that was a shameful episode in recent American history, had it gone the other way, which would have only taken one courageous, farsighted person, it would have been the opposite. So it was possible.

Forced to bet, I would not have bet on the super committee. It's easy to be pessimistic because of what's happened. But it isn't that hard to move this country forward in the right way. And one member of that super committee could have done it, with the cooperation of those on the other side. Maybe that person would have been voted out of office. Maybe not. But let's assume he would have been. That's a small price to pay for getting the glory of moving this country forward with a

major agreement on short-term stimulus, long-term deficit reduction, and avoiding the fiscal cliff. The alternative is kicking the can down the road, and they're going to have the same problem again come December [when the Bush tax cuts expire, and automatic spending cuts triggered by the failure of the super committee are scheduled to go into effect].

Has the *Citizens United* decision made things worse? You talk in the book about the time legislators must devote to fundraising. But now there's this whole other level.

Really the biggest problem is the most mundane, which is, if we elect people to govern us well, they need time to do it. And raising that much money takes a lot of time. It takes staff. It is a huge distraction. And one could imagine there should be a campaign season, and campaign seasons are distractions from governing. But when it's all the time, it's a very big, very big problem.

And so regardless of the source of the revenue, the time commitment is really the thing.

Well, it's a very big neglected problem. There are many other problems attached to getting large amounts of money from single donors, including one's implicit, if not explicit, obligations to them.

You mentioned John Roberts earlier. What does the Supreme Court decision on the Affordable Care Act say about compromise?

We really don't know what goes on in the chambers of the Supreme Court. And I think it's good that they can deliberate in secret so they don't have the 24/7 news cycle derailing their deliberations before they actually come to conclusions. And once they decide, they then make public their reasoning, which is a really good aspect of judicial deliberations: they actually account to the American public. They're not accountable through elections, but they are accountable through giving their reasons for it.

The prediction was 80 percent that it would be struck down. And almost nobody predicted that it would be a 5-4 where Roberts wrote the majority decision. Whether it was a compromise, we don't know, and we may never know. It may have been a compromise, but not characterized that way by the two liberals [Justices Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer]

who joined Roberts in overturning the federal mandate on Medicaid, and Roberts, who joined the four liberals on upholding the Affordable Care Act under the tax provision, but not under the Commerce Clause. But it reads like a classic compromise, and it operates that way.

Neither side is totally happy about the results. Obviously those defending the Affordable Care Act are more pleased with the results than those opposed to it. But for those three—for Kagan, Breyer, and Roberts—if it took those votes to yield this result, those of us who think that it's better not to explode the whole Affordable Care Act, I think, should applaud them. And certainly Roberts showed that, as Chief Justice, caring about the public sense of the court as not simply another partisan institution, what he did was, I think, admirable and totally justifiable.

How will the compromising mindset fare up to and after the election?

We're not in the business of prediction here. But now that we're in campaign season, you're not going to see a lot of the compromising mindset on display. [But] after the election, before the fiscal cliff, there's going to have to be. There has to be enough of a compromising mindset because those who are elected into office, if they let us go off the fiscal cliff, the approval rating of the Congress and president will make Congress's 10 percent approval rating look high. So there will be an opportunity right after the election to see the beginnings of a compromising mindset coming into its own.

What we argue in the book is that it's not that you should want all of the compromising mindset. You just should want the permanent campaign of the uncompromising mindset not to take over government like an invasive species that doesn't allow any governing to happen. So the prediction is we will see more opportunities for compromise. I would not say we're going to see a total change in mindset. Far from it. But what we'd hope—and what our book provides reason to support—is that some of those legislators who have relationships in Congress step forward in the spirit of Simpson-Bowles and start crafting something that over time might become a big compromise that stimulates the economy in the short run and really bites the bullet on some serious deficit reduction.

have passed the House, though none has come close to overcoming the hurdles for passing the necessary constitutional amendment.

The Constitutional Convention settled on the two-year term for House members purely as a compromise. They split the difference between Roger Sherman and Elbridge Gerry, who wanted one-year terms (“the only defense of the people against tyranny”), and James Madison, who argued for three-year terms (“necessary ... for members to form any knowledge of the various interests of the States to which they do not belong”). Making a point that (suitably updated) resonates today, Madison objected to the shorter term because the time would be “almost consumed in preparing for and traveling to and from the seat of national business.” Today the problem is not travel time as such, but campaign time—which just as surely takes time away from the national business. Any reform that involves lengthening terms would need to be coupled with other measures, because the terms would still remain reasonably short (in order to hold representatives accountable) and the demands of fundraising would still remain unreasonably great (in the absence of significant campaign finance reform).

Time is Money. By far the greatest impact of campaigning on legislators’ time is fundraising. As campaigns have become more expensive, the pressure to raise money has become relentless. The money chase does not end when the election does. Almost from the first day in office, legislators begin the race for money again.

Their most important fundraisers (those who bundle contributions) and the most influential independent groups (those that provide media support) typically expect candidates to take hardline positions and hold to them. Candidates must convince potential donors that they can be trusted to keep the faith. Not only does the time spent fundraising take time away from governing; what happens during that time reinforces attitudes that get in the way of governing. Fundraising is both an opportunity cost and also a direct cost to governing.

If these costs were more widely recognized, most politicians and most citizens would probably agree that they should be reduced if possible. But how to reduce them would remain controversial. There are abundant proposals for campaign finance reform. And there are just as many obstacles to implementing them, including the [Supreme] Court and the Congress itself. Limits on contributions are necessary to protect the democratic process, but their effect is to force candidates to spend still more time in order to reach more donors. Limits on expenditures would better serve time-protection, but the now dominant (though misguided) interpretation of the constitutional right of free speech stands in the way. With the road to limits judicially blocked, reform efforts have turned to various means of public financing. The most promising are those that would encourage grassroots fundraising.

Other proposed changes would apply directly to the legislature. Some reformers have called for a ban on fundraising in Congress between January and June every year, as some state legislatures do. This would not raise constitutional questions. Another proposal would prohibit members from raising money outside of their districts. Yet another would abolish leadership

PACs, organizations set up by politicians in Congress and some state legislatures to raise money for other politicians.

For the project of protecting time for governing with a compromising mindset, we do not have to commit to any particular reform for campaign finance. What is important is to recognize that whatever reforms are proposed need to be directly targeted to the problem of the permanent campaign and its effect on compromise. Many democratic values are at risk in the current regime of campaign finance, and some reforms would be desirable quite apart from their effects on compromise. But some reforms that might help prevent corruption—for example, contribution limits without public financing—might not do much for controlling the permanent campaign. We need to recognize that a failure to deal with the problem of the permanent campaign affects the capacity not only for honest governing but for governing at all.

Primary Pressures. The type of primary affects the kind of candidate who is likely to be nominated. The more common type, the closed primary, in which only the members of a political party can vote on its nominees, favors candidates who appeal to the party’s base. They are more likely to hold positions further from the center of the political spectrum and are likely to find it harder to compromise once in office.

Other types of primaries give voters opportunities to influence the choice of nominees in either party. In the standard open primary, for example, a registered voter may request a ballot for any party, but then must choose among only candidates of that party. A still more open type, the blanket primary that California adopted in 1996, would permit any registered voter to vote for any nominee for any office. The Supreme Court struck down California’s version on the grounds that it violated the right of free association by forcing a political party to open up its candidate selection process to “persons wholly unaffiliated with the party, who may have different views from the party.” But the Court did not ban all open primaries. It did not rule out a nonpartisan open primary like the one used in Louisiana. In 2008, it also rejected a challenge to Washington state’s novel system in which candidates themselves declare their partisan affiliation, voters may select any candidate regardless of party preference, and the two top candidates advance to the general election, regardless of their party affiliation.

Although the general case for the open primary may be mixed, its contribution to a politics of compromise is clear. Open primaries may not reduce the pressures of campaigning, but they encourage a different kind of campaigning and favor a different kind of candidate. They tend to produce candidates who are more centrist relative to the overall political landscape. Officials elected under these systems stand closer to the median policy positions of their districts than do those elected under closed primaries. Because candidates need to “attract support from the entire electorate, not simply from members of their respective parties,” they have a greater incentive to collaborate across party lines. In this way, open primaries support the building of broader coalitions and reduce the factionalism that makes compromise harder.

More Participation? It is more difficult to register and to vote in the United States than in other Western democracies. Voter registration is not generally automatic, and Election Day is not a national holiday. This electoral regime favors more activist, higher-income, and older-than-average citizens. The more difficult the simple act of voting, the more the uncompromising is favored over the compromising mindset, further decreasing the electoral incentives for politicians to compromise in office. Making voting easier and declaring Election Day a holiday could ameliorate this problem.

Should we also promote political activism beyond voting? This may be a worthy aim for other democratic reasons, but by itself it is not likely to serve the cause of compromise. Political activists are not only more partisan, which is to be expected. They are also less tolerant of partisan differences and more closed-minded to compromise.

Any reform effort that seeks to promote more participation and at the same time sustain the disposition to compromise will need to look beyond political structures to social institutions such as the media and civic education. We cannot count on politicians or political movements alone to make the changes surveyed here. Madison presciently recognized the difficulty. We can trust the normal process of representation, he said, provided that the issue is one on which representatives share a common interest with their constituents. But we should be “jealous” of assigning representatives the final authority on those questions in which they “have a personal interest distinct from that of their constituents.” Except for proposals to lengthen terms, politicians are not inclined to favor changes to a system that has treated them well, especially changes that might put their careers at greater risk. Even politicians who would be willing to press for changes to constrain the permanent campaign cannot do the job alone. They have an increasingly difficult time gaining the support they need in a media environment that reinforces the tendency to turn governing into campaigning.

Minding the Media. No institutions beyond government and elections have contributed more to making campaigns permanent than the media. They tend to cover governing as if it were campaigning, and campaigning as if it had little to do with governing. The former tendency frustrates efforts to compromise, while the latter reinforces the resistance to compromise that hardly needs reinforcing. Sustaining both tendencies is a type of political journalism that has become dominant in recent years—so-called horse race coverage. It reflects only too well the uncompromising mindset by portraying politicians as engaged in a no-holds-barred competitive struggle in which only one side can win, and neither has any reason to cooperate with the other.

COMPROMISERS DO NOT MAKE THE MOST COMPELLING TELEVISION.

The possibility that politicians might sincerely hold principles but are willing to modify them to make the compromises necessary for governing is lost in the competitive fog that lingers from the campaign stories. Those politicians who do modify their principles once in office are promptly charged with flip-flopping, political opportunism, or just plain inconsistency. Such charges may often be valid, but the narrow strategic frame makes no allowance for when they are not. As a result, genuine efforts to compromise are painted with the same narrowly strategic brush as are manipulative efforts to continue the campaign by other means. At the same time, the talk shows feature commentators and politicians who represent extreme views or who take sharply differentiated positions. Compromisers do not make the most compelling television.

When the media assume politicians are motivated solely by a desire to win the next election and treat their policy proposals as only ploys to win votes, they cast a cynical pall over democratic politics. They make compromise and therefore governing more difficult. Again, like most professionals who act for others while advancing their careers, politicians have mixed motives. They may be trying to do the best they can for a cause in which they believe while also striving to win or retain office. When motives are mixed, the media seriously distort democratic politics by framing what politicians do exclusively in terms of a competitive campaign.

Part of the treatment for this distortion would be a richer diet of reporting on the substance of policy and policymaking—the views of politicians, commentators, and experts on the costs and benefits, fairness, and other consequences of various proposals and the possible compromises. It would feature as a main course a range of answers to the key question about possible compromise: is a proposed law (or any feasible alternative) an improvement over the status quo?

We do not suggest that the media should concentrate only on the substance of policy. Such stories are often less captivating than those that recount the strategic maneuvering of politicians. Moreover, governing is itself strategic, and reporting on governing should not avoid strategic framing. But the frame need not be so narrow as to present politicians as acting only to defeat their opponents. The media could more often and more regularly adopt what we call broad strategic framing.

A broad strategic frame would lead journalists to emphasize not only how politicians are positioning themselves in the polls but also how they plan to achieve their policy goals—their policymaking strategies. This frame shifts the kind of strategic questions the media asks: Would compromising or refusing to compromise be more likely to achieve the goals of either or both sides, and the public? What are the likely effects on relationships in the legislature and the possibility of compromises in the future? Are legislators missing opportunities for compromise or holding out for compromises that have no

chance of success? Are they letting a search for common-ground agreements get in the way of making classic compromises in which everyone has to make major sacrifices? Who are their potential allies, and what are their conditions for support? These kinds of questions about governing, which are all strategically focused, can attract audiences at the same time as they inform citizens about the demands of governing in the context of a permanent campaign. Even in the campaign, such questions could remind everyone that campaigning is not an end in itself but only a prelude to governing.

Journalists who may be inclined to favor this kind of reporting and commentary confront trends in a changing media environment that make their task more difficult than before. The readership of national newspapers has declined sharply over the past two decades, and the viewership of television network news has shrunk, though less acutely; it has also aged. As citizens increasingly not only live and work with like-minded people, but also read, view, tweet, and text through like-minded media, they are exposed to messages consistent with political tenacity and mistrust of partisan opponents more than to those conducive to compromise.

[T]he rise of new media might seem to offer a way out because the new media increase the opportunities for exposure to diverse sources of information and commentary. However, the same expansion of segmented media carries with it a heightened challenge to citizens and journalists to learn how better to discern fact from fiction. When news sources cater to niche markets, readers and viewers find it easier to believe whatever supports their preexisting political perspectives and to disbelieve verifiable facts. This suits the uncompromising mindset perfectly.

Several reforms that take a constructive approach, making the most of both press freedom and journalistic responsibility, are worth considering. First of all, some of the changes proposed for improving campaign coverage could enhance governmental coverage as well. For example, journalists themselves could use focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of what citizens want and need in the form of political information. They may find, as did an important study of the 1992 presidential campaign, that even if horse-race coverage attracts audiences, it is neither as “useful nor [as] interesting to the public” as other forms [such as] news analysis or interviews with the candidates.

Another set of proposals about campaign coverage would encourage reporters to spend less time on the campaign trail and more time on other aspects of the process. This would give them a broader perspective and also allow them to develop expertise in some relevant subject, such as economics, law enforcement, or legislative politics. Journalists who stay on the campaign trail would be encouraged to rotate among the candidates to temper the “jaded, know-it-all tone” and “pack journalism” that “infects too much political news,” [as political scientist Larry M. Bartels put it in *Campaign Reform: Insights and Evidence*]. Analogous changes in the way coverage of the White House and Congress is organized could help reframe the picture of governing that now is so heavily colored by the hues of campaigning.

In any effort to right the balance between campaigning and governing in the coverage of politics, the media certainly

cannot do the job alone. Their readers and viewers share the responsibility. By what they choose to watch and read, citizens can demonstrate that they appreciate the benefits of engagement with a variety of viewpoints and news sources.

Strengthening Civic Education. Education that could further students’ understanding of the role of compromise in democracy has three aims. The first is an appreciation of compromise in American political history. It should be possible to help students appreciate how American democracy has been politically constructed on political compromise—while encouraging them to assess critically the particular compromises they study.

The second aim is to develop understanding of other political perspectives well enough to present competing positions in their strongest form rather than as caricatures that can be dismissed wholesale.

Effective exercises in understanding other political perspectives are all the more important because American families today tend to live in ideologically homogeneous communities and send their children to schools that mirror or accentuate this homogeneity. In this environment, learning to appreciate opposing positions becomes a critically important exercise in mutual respect and civic understanding more generally.

The third aim is to empower students to engage in face-to-face discussions of contemporary issues in politics. This pedagogy, still somewhat controversial, has been adopted with considerable success in a number of schools. [As education scholar Diana Hess notes in *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion*, discussions are more likely to be productive if they occur in a “classroom environment that encourages analysis and critique of multiple competing viewpoints.”

To appreciate the value of both disagreement and compromise in politics, students need to learn how to understand diverse viewpoints and also how to accommodate them in collective endeavors when necessary to improve on the status quo and make a positive difference in society.

Campaigning is an essential part of the democratic process, but when it spills out of its natural environment and threatens the hardiness of governing, it needs to be pruned back. The mindset it breeds is hostile to governing. To control its spread, more politicians need to adopt the compromising mindset more of the time.

Politicians who combine the mindsets require both institutional and public support to succeed in democratic politics. Institutional reforms of the kind canvassed [here] are an important complement to recognizing the difficulty that the dominance of campaigning over governing creates for democratic compromise. Yet major institutional change in the public interest itself requires compromise, and the leaders who would bring it about will themselves have to set their minds to it. In an earlier uncompromising era, the Beatles got it just about right: “You tell me it’s the institution. Well, you know. You’d better free your mind instead.”◆

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