Introduction to American Government
POLS 1101
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Elections Clips

Martin Attacks Chambliss
Chambliss Attacks Martin
Clinton – its 3 am
SNL – 3 am
Clint Webb for Senate

Survey Design
Dale Peterson – We are better than that!
Guilty Jack
Thomas Jefferson Attack Ad
McCain Approves
**News**

Former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson “has been on the receiving end of attacks for his vice presidential pick, former Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld,” CNN reports. “Weld, a former Republican from a blue state, has had a difficult time pitching himself to the Libertarian convention. Many have been skeptical over Weld’s libertarian credentials, especially his record on gun control and support for Republican politicians. Prior to teaming up with Johnson, Weld had endorsed Republican Ohio Gov. John Kasich for President.”

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said that our system will prevent any “big mistakes” if Donald Trump becomes president, TPM reports. Said McConnell: “Well, one thing I’m pretty calm about is that this is nowhere near the most divisive period in American history. But what protects us in this country against big mistakes being made is the structure, the Constitution, the institutions.” He added: “No matter how unusual a personality may be who gets elected to office, there are constraints in this country. You don’t get to do anything you want to.”

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**Voting and Elections--Primaries**

“In the first month or so after becoming a Democrat, Specter was voting with his new party about two-thirds of the time on these Contentious Votes. While there are some less loyal Democrats -- say, Ben Nelson of Nebraska -- who only vote with their party about half the time, this was certainly less than what most Democratic observers were hoping for. But since then, indeed, something has changed. Well, a couple of things have changed. On May 27th, Congressman Joe Sestak announced that he intended to challenge Specter for the Democratic nomination. And since that time, Specter has voted with his party on 28 out of 29 Contentious Votes, or 97 percent of the time.” – fivethirtyeight.com, 7/25/2009
Important question: If Americans cherish the right to vote, why do so many neglect to exercise it?

The Logic of Elections

American democracy is representative democracy.

Madison emphasized the main differences between a democracy and a republic:

- “The two great points of difference...are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of the country, over which the latter may be extended.”

Delegation of authority raises the possibility of agency loss:

- one solution is to hold regular, free, competitive elections
The Logic of Elections

Elections work to ameliorate this problem:

• they give ordinary citizens a say in who represents them
• the prospect of future elections gives officeholders who want to keep or improve their jobs a motive to be responsive agents
• elections provide powerful incentives for the small set of citizens who want to replace the current officeholders to keep a close eye on representatives and to provide critical evaluations of them to the public at large

5 Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences

First Stage: Early 1800s—
Religious, property and tax qualifications begin to disappear in every State (universal white male suffrage by 1840s)

• only about half of the free adult male population was eligible to vote at the time the Constitution was adopted.
• those in an advantaged position were not inclined to risk the social order, which helped them maintain their position
• BUT: property requirements were not enforced strictly the Revolutionary War itself exerted a powerful influence on the demands to enlarge the franchise
• The vote was not extended simultaneously (as it was left to individual states to decide who could vote), but as it was extended, opposition to extending it became a political liability: as the electorate expanded, it became political suicide to oppose more democracy
• the property-less did not despoil the propertied.
• the conformity cost most dreaded did not emerge
5 Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences

Second Stage: 1870—15th amendment prohibits voting restrictions based on race or color
- Civil War Amendments: Thirteenth (formal emancipation), Fourteenth (granted citizenship), Fifteenth (guaranteed the right to vote)
- the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments did not prevent a century of racial discrimination at the polls.
- only the Voting Rights Act quickly and effectively achieved its goals

Third Stage: 1920—19th Amendment removes voting restrictions based on sex
- the women’s suffrage movement grew directly out of the antislavery movement (and temperance movement)
- the resistance to women’s suffrage was gradually overcome by a combination of social changes (increased education, more women in the workforce, political need)
- only southern Democrats held out to the end, fearing that inroads for women would reinforce federal support of suffrage for blacks.
- women did not alter the nature of politics. Indeed, no distinctive pattern of women’s voting was evident until the 1980s.
5 Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences

“We are not afraid to maul a black man over the head if he dares to vote, but we can't treat women, even black women, that way. No, we'll allow no woman suffrage. It may be right, but we won't have it.” – Sen. John Sharp Williams (D-MS)

4th Stage: 1965—Voting Rights Acts enforces racial equality at polling places

- Jim Crow Laws in place in the South (white primary, poll tax, literacy tests, grandfather clauses to protect poor and illiterate whites)
- Anti-lynching laws stymied in Congress
- Plessy v. Ferguson upholds “separate but equal doctrine” in 1896
- Civil Rights movement shifts from litigation (1940’s and 50’s) to mass protests (1960’s)
5 Stages of Extending Suffrage and Consequences

Fifth Stage: 1971—26th Amendment sets the minimum voting age at 18

- Also politically motivated: Eighteen-year olds old enough to fight, therefore old enough to vote
- The only discernible consequence was the decline in voting that occurred when the right was extended to eighteen-, nineteen-, and twenty-year-olds.

News

"A tie vote from the Supreme Court on Tuesday handed a win to labor unions in a high-profile dispute over their ability to collect fees," the AP reports. “The justices divided 4-4 in a case that considered whether public employees represented by a union can be required to pay ‘fair share’ fees covering collective bargaining costs even if they are not members. The split vote leaves in place an appeals court ruling that upheld the practice.” “The result is an unlikely victory for organized labor after it seemed almost certain the high court would rule 5-4 to overturn a regime in place nearly 40 years. The court is operating with only eight justices after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, who had been expected to rule against the unions.”

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal (R) vetoed the “religious liberty” bill that triggered a wave of criticism from gay rights groups and business leaders and presented him with one of the most consequential challenges he’s faced since his election to Georgia’s top office, the Atlanta Journal Constitution reports. Said Deal: “Our people work side by side without regard to the color of our skin, or the religion we adhere to. We are working to make life better for our families and our communities. That is the character of Georgia. I intend to do my part to keep it that way.”

If you think wealth is concentrated in the United States, just wait till you look at the data on campaign spending. In the 2010 election cycle, 26,783 individuals (or slightly less than one in ten thousand Americans) each contributed more than $10,000 to federal political campaigns. Combined, these donors spent $774 million. That's 24.3% of the total from individuals to politicians, parties, PACs, and independent expenditure groups. Together, they would fill only two-thirds of the 41,222 seats at Nationals Park the baseball field two miles from the U.S. Capitol. When it comes to politics, they are The One Percent of the One Percent.
Who Uses the Right to Vote?

Most of us agree that the right to vote is the very essence of democracy.

Yet millions of Americans do not vote. Is this irrational? Paradoxical?

- not when you consider that the benefits of elections are collective benefits
- people enjoy the payoffs even if they have not helped to produce them by voting
- a single vote is not likely to make much of a difference. And voting is costly!
- makes sense to demand the right to vote. But rational not to use it

Amazing outcome is that so many people actually do turn out to vote!
- Freerider problems are overcome.

Same logic applies to gathering information about the competing candidates and parties if a person chooses to vote.

The share of eligible voters who go to the polls has varied widely over American history.

The most important contemporary change was the sharp decline in voter turnout between 1960 and 1972:
- since then, an average of only about 58 percent of the eligible electorate has bothered to register and vote in presidential elections
- even the hotly contested 2008 race inspired a turnout of only about 61 percent
Who Uses the Right to Vote?

A word of caution: the measure matters!

What’s wrong with simply calculating voter turnout by dividing the total number of votes cast by the total number voting age residents? What affect would this have?

Age and education have the strongest influence on voting.

African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to vote (taking other factors into account), as are people who live in southern states or those that border southern states.

People with deeper roots in their community vote more often as do those with internal and external efficacy.

Turnout is higher in areas where there are fewer barriers to registration.
Who Uses the Right to Vote?

Turnout is higher among people with stronger partisan views and electoral preferences.

If one lives in an area with more active parties and more competitive elections, there is also an increased probability of voting.

In terms of gender, men and women are equally likely to turn out and vote.

The cynical and distrusting are as likely to vote as anyone else.

- contradicts a popular explanation for the decline in participation—that it resulted from an increase in public cynicism and mistrust since 1960.

Who Uses the Right to Vote?

Voting and other forms of political participation incur costs but produce benefits.

People participate when they can meet the costs and appreciate the benefits.

Those with money, education, experience, free time, and self-confidence find it easier to meet the costs, while those with a greater psychological stake receive greater benefits.

Voting therefore rational for those who derive personal satisfaction from going to the polls. Expressing themselves through voting typically outweighs the modest costs of casting a ballot.
Who Uses the Right to Vote?

Differences in participation cannot be explained completely by individual differences in resources and psychological involvement, however.

Institutional contexts (variation in registration laws, for example) affect turnout as well.

Social circumstances also play a crucial part in stimulating turnout:

- social connections help with efficacy levels, information, and contact with activists.
- often people participate because they have been asked to do so.

“Do Voter ID Laws Depress Turnout?” John Sides, themonkeycage, 10/3/2011

A new Brennan Center study—which is getting front-page news coverage—attempts to count the number of citizens that could be adversely affected by new laws requiring voters to have photo identification. But do these laws actually reduce voter turnout?

In my 2007 post on this subject, I noted two studies. One determined that immigrants and ethnic minorities would be less likely to have these forms of identification. A second—available here at the Brennan Center’s website—found that citizens in states that required photo identification reported turning out at a rate 2 points lower than citizens in other states.

But other studies do not find any negative effect of identification laws on turnout. Here is a one. And here is another, by Robert Erikson and Lorraine Minnite. I’ll quote from their conclusions:

The moral is simple. We should be wary of claims—from all sides of the controversy—regarding turnout effects from voter ID laws. The effects may be there. By all tests there is nothing to suggest otherwise. But the data are not up to the task of making a compelling statistical argument.

The Brennan Center has a list of studies here.

None of this is to say that voter identification laws are unproblematic. It is just difficult to prove that they are associated with lower turnout.
The Non-Representative Electorate

The assorted demographic and institutional influences on voting produce an electorate (the voting public) in which:

• Wealthy, well-educated, older white people are overrepresented.
• Poor, uneducated, young, and nonwhite people are underrepresented.

People like this are more likely to be mobilized by parties, interest groups, and campaigns:

• they are targeted as the cheapest to reach and the easiest to mobilize
• “the pressures that political leaders face to use their own resources most effectively build a class bias into their efforts to mobilize.”—Rosenstone and Hansen

Variation in Turnout over Time

Earlier discussion focused on the factors that explain variations in participation among individuals, but what accounts for variations in turnout over time?

Puzzling: While voter registration laws have eased and educational attainment has increased, why has voter turnout declined over time? These changes should have increased turnout.

While these two trends have had a positive effect on turnout, other factors have had the opposite effect:

• extending the vote to eighteen-to-twenty-year-olds
• lessening of community roots (increased mobility), lessening of political efficacy, lessening of partisan attachment
Variation in Turnout over Time

The major reasons for the decline, however, are institutional. Fewer people voting because fewer people are being mobilized by parties, campaigns, and interest groups:

- Most parties and candidates have replaced labor-intensive door-to-door campaigns with money-intensive television and direct-mail campaigns.
- Focus scarce resources on tightest races
- Diminishment of Civil Rights movement to mobilize black voters
- Diminishment of labor union movement and their efforts to union workers and their families

Turnout is directly affected by the activities of political entrepreneurs pursuing offices or policies.

When their goals and tactics change, so does the level of electoral participation.

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News

NBC News: “Republicans are growing increasingly concerned about the impact a Donald Trump presidential nomination could have on other GOPers whose names are on the ballot this November. Nearly every recent poll measuring a potential Trump v. Hillary Clinton general election matchup shows the real estate mogul with a double-digit deficit. And a potential blowout loss could have a major impact on down-ballot races. Case in point: Just eight of the 21 GOP senators up for re-election in 2016 have said they would unquestionably support Trump, according to an NBC News count.”

“Another data point to keep in mind shows just how much the confluence of statewide and national political factors have Republican biting their nails with a little more anxiety since last year. Back in November, the Cook Political Report ranked a total of five Senate races in the ‘Toss Up’ category, including four seats currently held by Republicans and just one held by Democrats. Now that’s up to six Republican-held seats, with no movement on the D side.”

WASHINGTON — The House Freedom Caucus has already changed the direction of Congress this year, derailing — at least temporarily — a House GOP budget that conservatives argue spends too much. Now they have a new target in sight: the lame-duck session. When the House returns from a two-week recess on April 12, a small group of members are gearing up to stop GOP leadership in both chambers, if they have their way, from holding a legislative session after the November election. It’s not that the members are lazy, though doing away with the postelection session would mean the House would be in session just 17 days for the rest of the year after July 15 — and zero past Sept. 30. The conservative members say they are trying to stop Congress from doing anything after the November election because Congress does some of its most slapdash lawmaking once an election is over.
How Do Voters Decide?

Acquire information to reduce uncertainty. Cues and shortcuts through:

- Opinion leaders
- Personal characteristics of the candidate
- Party label

Free information through the press, social media and friends.

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How Do Voters Decide?

Assessing past performance.

- Evaluating incumbents. “Are you better off now than you were four years ago?”
- Role of the economy.
- Utilize direct experience/experience of others via the media
How Do Voters Decide?

2008 Election—Family’s financial situation?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obama (D)</th>
<th>McCain (R)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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Comparing future policy options.

- Focus on issues: Guns, abortion, tax cuts, civil rights, etc.

Depends (single-issue voters versus those who make decisions based on bundles of issues).

Voters may take cues from opinion leaders.

Voters also make predictions based on the candidates’ personal characteristics:

- one set of personal considerations includes qualities such as competence, experience, honesty, knowledge, and leadership skills
How Do Voters Decide?

The most important information shortcut voters use to make predictions is party label.

The party label provides useful information for both: performance voting (voting for the party in control, or “in-party” when one thinks the government is performing well; voting for the outs when one thinks the government is performing poorly) and issue voting (the typical positions of Republicans and Democrats; the parties differ in predictable ways on many issues).

Most voters simplify their electoral evaluations and decisions by developing a consistent bias in favor of the candidates of one of the major parties, making the party label the most influential “endorsement” of all.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008 Election—By party affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (29%)</td>
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Election Campaigns

Common features found throughout competitive campaigns:

- Candidate
- Message (i.e. “It’s the economy, stupid!”)

When they can, campaigns will test out their message by conducting numerous focus group sessions in which a small number of citizens are observed as they talk with each other about candidates, issues and events.

A candidate’s public image is important. They (especially presidential candidates) need to maintain it in the face of heavy scrutinizing by the media.

Televised debates present challenges—and front-runners will often try to minimize them as the risk of damaging missteps typically outweighs the potential gains.

Going Negative…

Campaign messages emphasizing one candidate’s personal suitability for the job invite rebuttals from the other side.

Negative campaigning, pointed personal criticism of the other candidate, is thus a normal, if sometimes ugly, component of the electoral process. Why do candidates “go negative?” Because it works. They exploit uncertainty about a given candidate.
Campaign Money and Its Regulation

A good candidate and a good message are not enough. Without money, the voters do not see the candidate or hear the message.

In contemporary, candidate-centered campaigns, candidates (as opposed to the party organizations) must assemble their own campaign teams, raise their own money, hire consultants and specialists, and design and execute their own campaign strategies.

Taxpayers partially finance presidential campaigns, but most of the money spent on congressional elections comes from private sources.

Privately financed elections inevitably raise two related problems for American democracy:

- Democracy demands political equality. But money is distributed very unequally, thus its role in electoral politics threatens democratic equality.
- Privately financed elections raise the suspicion that elected officials will serve as the agents of their contributors rather than their constituents.

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Campaign Money and Its Regulation

Pursuit of money can subvert the very purpose of elections. Before the 1970s campaign money was effectively unregulated.

As campaigns became more candidate-centered and broadcast campaigning became the standard, costs increased the demand for money, but many began to fear that winners would favor contributors over constituents.

Congress responded to this situation with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, extensively amended in 1974.

- Law provided partial public funding for presidential campaigns and required full public reporting of, and strict limits on, all contributions and expenditures in federal elections
- established the Federal Election Commission to enforce the law and to collect and publish detailed information on campaign contributions and expenditures
Campaign Money and Its Regulation

Keating Five: Occurs during the savings and loan scandal

Keating is being investigated by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board

He had given a ton of money to these five senators (and probably more)

Asks them to intervene on his behalf

They have a couple meetings with FHLBB, ask them to either charge Keating or back off.

Campaign Money and Its Regulation

*Buckley v. Valeo* (1976)

Question(s): Does the FEC Act’s spending restrictions violate the first amendment?

Holding (per curium) -> (1) restrictions on contributions do not violate the SoP clause. (2) restrictions on expenditures do, however.

Dissent (Burger) -> This is idiotic. There is no difference between contributions and expenditures. Void the entire law.

Dissent (White) -> This is idiotic. There is no difference between contributions and expenditures. Uphold the entire law.
Campaign Money and Its Regulation

Concerned that spending limits were choking off traditional local party activity in federal elections, Congress liberalized FECA in 1979.

- this amendment to the act allowed unrestricted contributions and spending for state and local party-building and get-out-the-vote activities (soft money)
- monies given directly to the candidate are known as hard money
- 1996 Court decision gave party organizations the right to unfettered independent spending as well.

In March of 2002 Congress passed a law prohibiting parties from raising and spending soft money for federal candidates:

- the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act

Campaign Money and Its Regulation

The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act – Much of the Act was upheld in McConnell v. the FEC (2004), however, it is later weakened by FEC v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc. (2007)

- Former soft money donors rerouted money into so-called 537 committees and 501(c) committees (“charitable” groups under the tax code who can finance campaigns if they maintain the fiction that they are merely informing voters, not advocating the election or defeat of particular candidates).

In 2010 (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) the Court overturned precedent to invalidate any restriction on independent campaign spending by any organizations, including corporations and labor unions, based on First Amendment rights.
Campaign Money and Its Regulation


Overruling two important precedents about the First Amendment rights of corporations, a bitterly divided Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the government may not ban political spending by corporations in candidate elections.

The 5-to-4 decision was a vindication, the majority said, of the First Amendment’s most basic free speech principle — that the government has no business regulating political speech. The dissenters said that allowing corporate money to flood the political marketplace would corrupt democracy.

The ruling represented a sharp doctrinal shift, and it will have major political and practical consequences. Specialists in campaign finance law said they expected the decision to reshape the way elections were conducted. Though the decision does not directly address them, its logic also applies to the labor unions that are often at political odds with big business.

President Obama called it “a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans.”

Campaign Money and Its Regulation

“Do Unlimited Campaign Contributions Help Republicans?” Lee Drutman, the Monkeycage, 1/25/10

Will the Citizens United decision help Republicans more, since they’ve traditionally raised more money from corporations, who can now spend unlimited amounts?

As the New York Times notes, 24 states ban or restrict corporate contributions, and 26 allow unlimited contributions. So do Republicans do better in those states with unlimited contributions? One way to assess this is to run some very simple regressions. We would expect that the Democrats’ share of seats in state legislatures in 2009 would be strongly predicted by Obama’s vote share in 2008. It is.

But what if we added a dummy variable for whether a state bans or restricts campaign contributions into this regression? In state houses, having a ban or restriction improves the Democrat share of seats by three percentage points on average, but the result is not statistically significant (b=.03; se=.03). In state senates, it has no effect (b=.01; se=.04).

This provides a cautionary note to fears that unlimited contributions will inevitably create a partisan bias in election outcomes. But Lee notes: On the other hand, there may be an effect on the policy positions of different parties, particularly the Democrats. This will definitely be worth watching.
Campaign Money and Its Regulation

The flow of campaign money has continued to outpace inflation.

- total funding from all sources for the general election campaigns for president rose from $453 million in 1996 to $676 million in 2000, and to $1.262 billion in 2004. Over 2 billion in 2008 and 2012.

Spending in House and Senate campaigns also has continued to grow, rising by an average of about 9 percent in the House and 12 percent in the Senate from one election year to the next:

- average winning House campaign in 2012: $1.7 million; average winning Senate campaign in 2012: $10.5 million

Contributors tend to favor winners:

- thus incumbents generally are favored and challengers have a more difficult time

Candidates for open seats are usually in a much better position to raise funds:

- contributors correctly see open contests as their best opportunity for taking a seat from the other party.

Money is not likely to win a presidential election for someone, but it does help the candidates get their message out. The more uncertain the election (the less information available about the candidates), the more likely money can matter.

In House and Senate races, money (primarily the lack of it) is frequently the deciding factor.
A Side Note: Endogeneity

Variables are said to be endogenous when they are predicted by other variables in the model.

What does this mean?

Think about elections. If I was to run a simple model predicting a congressional candidate’s vote share using the amount of money spent, what would that model show?

- Jeff Sessions (R-AL) $3,906,680 – 63% of the vote
- Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) $18,045,811 – 50% of the vote

Economic Inequality and Political Power

“Economic Inequality and Political Power (Part 1 of 3), Martin Gilens, themonkeycage, 8/3/2012

In a democracy, all citizens—the rich, middle-class, poor alike—must have some ability to influence what their government does. Few people would expect that influence to be identical: those with higher incomes and better connections will always be more influential. But if influence becomes so unequal that the wishes of most citizens are ignored most of the time, a country’s claim to be a democracy is cast in doubt. And that is exactly what I found in my analyses of the link between public preferences and government policy in the U.S.

In my recent book, Affluence & Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America, I examined thousands of proposed policy changes over the past four decades. I compared the strength of support (or opposition) of survey respondents at different income levels with actual policy outcomes in the years following the survey. As expected, greater public support increased the likelihood of a proposed policy change being adopted, as shown in the first chart below.
Economic Inequality and Political Power

In many areas of government policy, the preferences of lower and higher income Americans are similar, and in these cases, the strength of the policy/preference link is necessarily similar as well. I found little difference by income level for about half the proposed policy changes in my dataset, including most aspects of defense, environmental policy, the war on drugs, family leave, and even antipoverty policy (where, for example, the affluent and the poor alike support strengthening work requirements, job training, and child care for welfare recipients).

When preferences across income groups do diverge, however, I found that the association with policy outcomes persisted for the affluent but disappeared for the middle class and the poor, as the second chart shows. (I used the 90th, 50th and 10th income percentiles to represent these three groups.)

Elections Revisited

Does money contributed to elections provide benefits to those who give?
- Access: yes.
- Policy favoritism: no indisputable evidence, but plenty of suggestive evidence.

Suggested reforms:
- Spending ceilings.
- Limiting donations and eliminating PACs.
- Public funding.

These all have their own problems, trade-offs. And there is no consensus on what would be best reform.
- Ultimate barrier: First Amendment.

Politicians HATE raising money.
Conclusion

Questions?

Enjoy the rest of your day!