

**Western University**

---

**From the Selected Works of Paul W Nesbitt-Larking**

---

2008

# Representative Democracy

Paul W Nesbitt-Larking

Volume 2

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
**U.S. Campaigns,  
Elections, and  
Electoral Behavior**



KENNETH F. WARREN  
GENERAL EDITOR



Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore

A SAGE Reference Publication

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

*For information:*



SAGE Publications, Inc.  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP  
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
B 1/11 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area  
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044  
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
33 Pekin Street #02-01  
Far East Square  
Singapore 048763

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Encyclopedia of U.S. campaigns, elections, and electoral behavior / Kenneth F. Warren, general editor.  
p. cm. — (A Sage reference publication)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-5489-1 (cloth)

1. Political campaigns-- United States --Encyclopedias. 2. Elections-- United States --Encyclopedias. I. Warren, Kenneth F., 1943

JK2281.E53 2008

324.973003--dc22

2007050207

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

08 09 10 11 12 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Photo credits are on page I-54

**GOLSON BOOKS, LTD.**

President and Editor	J. Geoffrey Golson
Creative Director	Mary Jo Scibetta
Managing Editor	Susan Moskowitz
Copyeditor	Mary Le Rouge
Layout Editor	Oona Patrick
Proofreader	Deborah Green
Indexer	J S Editorial

**SAGE REFERENCE**

Vice President and Publisher	Rolf Janke
Project Editor	Tracy Buyan
Cover Production	Janet Foulger
Marketing Manager	Amberlyn Erzinger
Editorial Assistant	Michele Thompson
Reference Systems Manager	Leticia Gutierrez

groups to advance their beliefs through campaigns and such groups have played an important role in subsequent presidential and congressional elections. Robertson and Jackson demonstrated that populist candidates could use churches as conduits for organizing people at the local level, and that churches could serve as key strategic locations for fundraising and social activism.

Religious groups function as sociological and political communities, and each community has differences in opinions, levels of activism, and beliefs. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, eschew forms of political activism, including voting, while the Christian Coalition encourages members to become very involved in the political process, including elections and campaigns. Mennonites and certain Church of God denominations oppose church and state involvement, and strongly denounce war.

Two of the easiest ways to measure the effect religious belonging has on the election process and campaigning, in general, is to look at voting behavior and campaign involvement. Researchers find that since the 1964 election, Jews exceed all other religious groups in voting. Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants follow, and are very similar in their voting behavior. African-American Protestants have the lowest voter turnout, and white Evangelical Protestants, especially those associated with the Christian Coalition and the Religious Right, have higher levels of voter participation.

Using a campaign behavior index to measure religious constituents attendance at meetings, work on a specific campaign, attempts to influence another's vote, displays of campaign materials, and work for a political party, can document religious influence. Since 1960, Jews have overwhelmingly played a more active role in campaigning, followed by mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, white Evangelical Protestants, and, finally, African-American Protestants. Also, since 2002, exit polls have shown a very high correlation between church attendance and voting. The more frequently people go to church, the more likely they are to vote Republican.

Religion can operate in many ways to influence elections and political campaigns. Through the development of a systemic belief structure, religion can influence one's actions and behavior in areas related to voting and political involvement. The religious beliefs and religious affiliation of political candidates have a tremendous bearing on the tone and outcome of an election. George W. Bush's acknowledgement that he looked to Jesus Christ for answers, coupled with Sena-

tor John Kerry's decision to have Joseph Lieberman, an orthodox Jew, serve as his running mate, had major repercussions for the 2004 presidential election. Candidates can use key moral issues to affect voter turnout and grassroots involvement by religious organizations such as the Religious Right can help determine the outcome of elections.

**SEE ALSO:** Issue Framing; Populists and Populist Movements; Presidential Election of 1928; Presidential Election of 1960; Presidential Election of 1984; Presidential Election of 1988; Presidential Election of 2004; Religion and Voting Behavior.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** James Guth, *The Bully Pulpit* (University of Kansas, 1997); Corwin Smidt, *In God We Trust: Religion and American Political Life* (Baker Press 2001); Kenneth Wald and Corwin Smidt, *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics* (M.E. Sharpe, 1993); Peter Wielhouwer, "Releasing the Fetters: Parties and Mobilization of the African-American Electorate," *Journal of Politics* (v.62, 2000).

RONALD ERIC MATTHEWS, JR.  
MOUNT UNION COLLEGE

---

## Representative Democracy

TO ADOPT LINCOLN'S Gettysburg declaration that democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people, is to endorse a formula that only begins to explain the diversity of regimes that have labeled themselves democratic. A great deal depends on how government might be said to belong to the people and how governments actually operate. A key variable in such considerations is the nature of political representation.

Governments that claim to be "of the people" will vary in the extent to which they represent the range and diversity of voices that constitute the polities that elect them. Apart from those who have been elected, government of the people also depends on who is represented between elections. If government is by the people, it matters which people come to be the people's representatives in government. Only in very small polities can there be any meaningful form of direct democracy. In modern democratic states with mass franchises, some form of representation is necessary. Given the necessary selectivity of this process, it

is important to know who runs and who does not run for office, and what chance they have of election. The electoral system itself influences who runs for office and who is elected. Government that is for the people presumably acts in their interests. Mechanisms are needed to assess such interests and how to represent them. Governments vary in how far they are prepared to go on behalf of their people, and may represent forces other than the interests of the people. A major challenge is to come up with people and practices to faithfully represent the public.

Democratic representation is associated with the rise of complex modern societies, notably those that have evolved over the past 200 years. Contemporary democracies have given rise to the growth of political institutions, such as legislatures, and political organizations such as political parties and interest groups. Representative democracy is complex and an adequate understanding of it is grounded in an appreciation of how institutional structures, political organizations, and political movements interact. Despite this, the basic model of representation is quite simple, it is inherent in all forms of political life, even those that existed in egalitarian pre-modern societies. From the beginning, human groups have found it useful to establish roles and select persons who are able to express the ideas, the purposes, or the visions of a number of others.

Representation has at least four distinct meanings in contemporary representative democracies, and particular political systems and eras can be characterized on the basis of particular mixes of these. Mandate representation consists of attempting to transmit, as faithfully as possible, precisely what the people have instructed them to do. In sociodemographic representation, individuals represent others to the extent that they approximate them in their background and personal characteristics such as age, sex, race, region, and religion.

Contemporary politics have been built around political parties. These are organizations that aggregate the generalized political will of large numbers of people. Members of political parties are bound by adherence to the party line; to the extent that they follow it, they manifest partisan representation. People held in high esteem, those who are knowledgeable, intelligent, and of good character, can be said to represent others based upon intrinsic qualities that set

them apart from others and fit them for leadership. Philosopher Edmund Burke referred to such qualities as virtual representation.

A representative democracy is in practice limited in certain respects. Populist versions of representative democracy envision that a majoritarian will can be translated into blunt forms of mandate representation. However, in practice, the majority does not always rule in an unrestricted manner. Forms of constitutional democracy or parliamentary democracy exist to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms set limits on what the people's representatives can do. The Rule of Law, guaranteed rights of certain minorities, the independence of the judiciary, and the supremacy of the Constitution, act further to restrict elected officials. The complexity of contemporary governance, the challenges of public stewardship, and the diversity of voices to be taken into account suggest the need for sociodemographic considerations and for virtual representation. Partisan representation reflects the ongoing challenges of piecing together winning coalitions of support that most broadly represent the political will of a plurality, while taking into account the needs and aspirations of minorities.

Existing structures of representative democracy have been criticized for a range of inadequacies including: excessive political centralization in the hands of executive branches, the irrelevance of legislators, the impotence of judiciaries, and the control of political agendas by those who control the economy. There are various suggestions for enhancing representative democracy: a reformed electoral system, a reassertion of the power of the legislature as people's representatives, controls over election financing and political financing between elections, a system of guaranteed and routine public consultations, and the active sustaining of channels of communication between the state and civil society.

**SEE ALSO:** Majority Rule; Participatory Democracy; Political Elites; Political Legitimacy and Democracy.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Paul Hirst, *Representative Democracy and Its Limits* (Polity Press, 1990); Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

PAUL WINGFIELD NESBITT-LARKING, PH.D.  
HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CANADA