

POLS115
Fall 2007
Essay #4

In Chapter Four of Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election, Stephen Wayne discusses the issue of money and politics and raises the issue of whether or not we need to reform our campaign finance system. Similarly, in Chapter Three of Claiming the Mantle, Lawrence Butler looks at the rules that apply to the financing of our presidential elections. Note that the rules we have for the presidential nomination campaign are unique. They apply only to this part of the election process. Both the presidential general election campaign and campaigns for House and Senate operate under different rules (though there is much overlap). For this essay, I want you to challenge or defend one of the first three "Topics for Debate" on page 102 of the Wayne book. The first two of these:

1. All laws regulating campaign finance, except for the reporting requirements, should be abolished. And,
2. All federal elections should be publicly financed.

deal with campaign finance in a general sense.

The third:

3. Congress should increase the matching funds and decrease the spending limits that accepting those funds impose on candidates seeking their party's presidential nomination.

deals with the specific rules of the nomination campaign.

Whichever proposition you end up challenging or defending, you will need to be clear as to what it is that we should both want and expect out of a system of campaign finance and how such a system can improve – or detract from – the health of our democracy. And be sure to site evidence from the 2008 nomination campaign in support of your position. The best places to go to find out about money in this campaign are:

The Center for Responsive Politics: <http://www.opensecrets.org> (click on the '08 Presidential Fundraising link in the center of the page) and

Political Money Line: <http://moneyline.cq.com> (click on the quick link to 2008 Presidential Candidates on the right side of the page).

In addition, for a defense of proposition one, go to the Cato Institute: <http://www.cato.org> (click on the link to Research Areas on the left side of the page, and then on the link to Government and Politics, and then on the link to campaign finance.)

For a defense of public finance (topic two), go to Common Cause, <http://www.commoncause.org> (click on the Topics link and then on Money in Politics).

And for a discussion of making the current matching fund system work better as proposed in topic three, go to the Campaign Finance Institute: <http://www.cfinst.org> (click on the link to President on the left side of the page for links to reports and information.)

Your essay will be evaluated with the following rubric:

1. Display understanding of the current finance system for Presidential nominations and its strengths and weaknesses as it pertains to the role of money in elections. (15 points):
2. Clarity of defense of, or challenge to, the proposed change (including, but not limited to, a discussion of how this change will help or hinder the system we currently use). (15 points):
3. Use of evidence from the 2008 campaign to support the argument being made. (30 points):
4. Coherence of essay (particularly, but not only, the relationship between the defense or challenge to the proposed change and the discussion of the role of money in democratic elections.) (20 points):
5. Quality of writing (spelling, grammar, clarity, punctuation, proper citation of sources, etc.). (20 points):