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# The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before And After Reform (Chicago Studies In American Politics)



## Synopsis

Throughout the contest for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, politicians and voters alike worried that the outcome might depend on the preferences of unelected superdelegates. This concern threw into relief the prevailing notion that "such unusually competitive cases notwithstanding" people, rather than parties, should and do control presidential nominations. But for the past several decades, *The Party Decides* shows, unelected insiders in both major parties have effectively selected candidates long before citizens reached the ballot box. Tracing the evolution of presidential nominations since the 1790s, this volume demonstrates how party insiders have sought since America's founding to control nominations as a means of getting what they want from government. Contrary to the common view that the party reforms of the 1970s gave voters more power, the authors contend that the most consequential contests remain the candidates' fights for prominent endorsements and the support of various interest groups and state party leaders. These invisible primaries produce frontrunners long before most voters start paying attention, profoundly influencing final election outcomes and investing parties with far more nominating power than is generally recognized.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How political parties form could be a subject too esoteric to gain interest outside of academic circles. But an understanding of what makes a political party, from intense policy demanders, to

their long coalition, has merit to anyone curious about the American political process. The notion that American political parties are passing away is a widely disseminated one. Using copious amounts of statistical data, this book tells a different story. Hardly a potboiler, this book portrays the a history of political parties in an insightful way that will lead one to a different conclusion. You may disagree, but the authors have tried very hard to prove otherwise.

I read this book for class and it provides plenty of great insights into the American political system, especially parties. It is an advanced style of writing for non-political scientists, but if you're interested in reading into how political nominations and parties function this is the book for you!

Good argument that one never votes for a person without voting for the party as well. One person alone cannot do much. One must always look at the persons ability to work with and influence others on the party. The candidate alone does not rule. They join a party that rules. This is why our system is difficult to change. It takes a party yet we too often elect people who can't work together.

Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller bridge the gap between academics' deep knowledge of political behavior and practitioners' sense of how elite politics actually work to produce perhaps the finest single bok on presidential politics in the past 25 years. The Party Decides deserves a spot beside classics such as Richard Neustadt's Presidential Power--and if your shelves only have room for one volume, junk Neustadt. In accessible but rigorous language, the authors lay out a persuasive theory of how partisan elites shape the selection of American presidential candidates, exercising their considerable power in a way that's both transparent--you can watch it happen in Iowa, in New Hampshire, and the pages of Politico!--but almost invisible because it's so transparent.

Writing this simply to let any student know that this textbook looks great on the Kindle. I love that I can search, highlight, notate and that the dictionary is called up on a finger press on a word. I am using 3 textbooks on my Kindle this term.

This book seeks to prove a point to an academic audience. Yet the authors also want to entertain and inform a popular audience. These goals conflict and it shows. They keep loosing me when they repeat their point and its proofs ad nauseum. This research paper...excuse me...book... has good information, good stories, and good ideas. But it simply doesn't come together well, especially for a non-specialist reader.

Quite good.

I can't seem to stop setting down this book and to finish it would be a waste of time. It's long for what it has to say. I feel an effort to pare it down and sharpen what remains could perhaps have made the difference between the reject pile and something to tolerate. There are no less than 4 authors and it shows. It was amusing to see that the authors think they are setting out to prove something contrarian, unobvious, and perhaps mildly unexpected. However, I get the impression they are trying to challenge some imagined prevailing view. If the authors succeed then what this book accomplishes is subtle and I don't care whether they can or cannot find distinctions between their perceptions and something some journalist or academic said on a particular occasion. In any such endeavour, if you look around even just a little bit you will inevitably find an article by somebody somewhere at some point in time that enables you to establish some sort of contrast. Some of it is straw-maning and the exaggeration or over-simplification of an opposing view. It's irritating to realize I have purchased a book where straw-maning is so easy to spot. I don't get the impression that what they are setting out to disprove needs to be disproved because I never believed that "the party does \*Not\* decide". The subject is not an orthodoxy that I care about if it even exists. I bought this on a recommendation and I was hoping that it would have been useful as a rich collection of anecdotes from insiders and an opinionated analysis of the political scene. This book is not that.

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