

Investigating the Viability of Third-Party Presidential Candidates in American Politics

Tom Pandolfo

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Abstract

In this paper, I attempt to assess the viability of a third-party presidential candidate in the current American two-party system. I first discuss the challenges facing third parties in the United States and the reasons for the American two-party system. I then investigate successful third party campaigns in order to determine how these challenges can be overcome. I then use these examples to generate solutions to third-party obstacles, and incorporate those solutions into hypothetical campaign materials for a fictional third party candidate. I then collect and analyze the results of a survey of American voters in order to assess whether and how a third-party campaign might succeed in the current American political environment. Finally, I present a series of actionable suggestions for overcoming obstacles to third party success.

1 – Introduction

Political scientist E. E. Schattschneider stated that “political parties created democracy, and...democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.”¹ While this may not be absolutely true for all democratic governments worldwide, it certainly pertains to the American political system. The political landscape of the United States is, and has been since the end of the eighteenth century, dominated by a two-party system; since the founding of the modern Democratic and Republican Parties, the overwhelming majority of elected officials have been aligned with one or the other.

For “third parties” intent on introducing new political ideas or reforms, this system is a detriment and has resulted in vastly disproportionate representation of members of these parties in federal and state governments. Despite a growing minority (nearly 40%) of Americans unaffiliated with either party², the Congressional Elections of 2012 yielded not a single third-party victory.³

This paper will explore the obstacles facing third parties and how they can be overcome by analyzing historical third party successes and near-successes and exploring solutions offered by political theorists. In addition, the viability of a hypothetical third-party presidential candidate will be assessed using recent voter preference data in conjunction with data from a survey of American voters.

¹ Schattschneider, E.E. *Party Government*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1942. p. 1

² Jeffrey M. Jones, “Democratic Party ID Drops in 2012, Tying 22-Year Low”, Gallup, Jan.5, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/145463/democratic-party-drops-2010-tying-year-ow.aspx>

³ Ballot Access News, Volume 28, Number 8, (Jan., 2013)

2 – The Origin of Political Parties in America

To understand the situation facing third parties in America, one must understand how the American party system came into being. In his book *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, political scientist John H. Aldrich explores the humble beginnings of the American two-party system, as well as the more general reasons behind the formation of political parties as solutions to a series of political problems. In particular, Aldrich presents a theory of political parties which asserts that parties will form in response to three problems: the problem of collective action, the problem of social choice, and the problem of electoral mobilization.

The collective action problem arises in cases where rational behavior on the part of individuals collectively results in a sub-optimal outcome. For instance, Aldrich cites an example in which three legislators (A, B, and C) must vote on a series of pork-barrel legislations (bills X, Y, and Z); each bill offers a different payoff – that is, either a benefit or drawback of some magnitude, indicated by positive or negative numbers, respectively – to each legislator (see Table 1).

	(Payoff from bill X)	(Payoff from bill Y)	(Payoff from bill Z)
Legislator A	4	3	-9
Legislator B	3	-9	4
Legislator C	-9	4	3

If acting as rational individuals, each legislator will vote for those bills for which he receives a positive payoff (Legislator A will vote for bills X and Y, and so forth). However, this results in a scenario in which all three bills pass and each legislator winds up with a payoff of -2 (adding the payoffs 4, 3, and -9), a decidedly sub-optimal solution for all three.

However, the introduction of political parties dramatically changes the outcome of the scenario. Let us suppose that the three legislators form a coalition and decide that they shall not vote for bills which offer a negative payoff to any of the three legislators. In this case, none of the bills would be passed and each legislator winds up with a payoff of 0. Or, let us suppose that legislators A and B form a coalition with similar conditions. In this scenario, A and B will work together to pass bill X, but veto bills Y and Z. This results in a strong positive payoff for members of the coalition (a payoff of 4 for Legislator A and a payoff of 3 for Legislator B), and a strong negative payoff for non-members (a payoff of -9 for Legislator C). Thus, says Aldrich, such pork-barrel legislation (any legislation which might benefit some legislators but have drawbacks for others) will encourage the formation of political parties.⁴

The social choice problem arises in situations in which there exists no solution which is favorable to all parties involved. To describe such a scenario, Aldrich reuses the payoff matrix in Table 1, but this time the bills are presented as three alternatives under simultaneous consideration, and the legislators must select one and only one option. In this scenario, even if all three legislators cooperate and form a coalition, there still exists no option which will satisfy all three (as one legislator will always end up with a negative payoff).

⁴ Aldrich, John H. *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. pp. 29-36

In this situation, there will be a strong tendency towards partisanship – unless two of the three legislators unite, there will be gridlock. If, for instance, Legislators A and B commit to a party, a vote will favor option X, resulting on payoffs of 4, 3, and -9 for A, B, and C, respectively. In this case, the benefits of joining a party are a reduction in uncertainty (since members of the party could be expected to all vote the same way) and insurance against ending up being the worst one off.⁵

Finally, parties tend to form in the presence of an electoral mobilization problem. Electoral mobilization is defined by Aldrich as the process of “getting the public to turn out to vote for, or otherwise support, a candidate”. In order to better understand the problem of electoral mobilization, Aldrich presents the following equation, developed by the scholars Riker and Ordeshook:

$$R = PB + D - C$$

Term	Meaning
<i>R</i>	Reward
<i>P</i>	Probability
<i>B</i>	Benefit
<i>D</i>	Duty
<i>C</i>	Cost

In the above equation, *R* is the “reward”, or expected benefit, of voting, *P* is the probability that an individual’s vote will affect the outcome, and *B* is the benefit expected if the voter’s preferred candidate wins. *D* is the duty, or the reward gained by the act of voting itself, and *C* is

⁵ Aldrich, pp. 37-45

the cost of voting, including time and effort.⁶ This can be seen as a large collective action problem: since the cost of voting is nonzero and the probability that an individual vote will affect the outcome of an election (and therefore the expected payoff of an individual vote) is very low, the average voter takes some persuasion before they will be inclined to expend effort to vote. A candidate's goal during an election is to maximize R – this can be achieved by reducing C (usually by informing and instructing voters, lowering the effort spent in information-gathering), or convincing voters that B is high by any number of means.

However, as Aldrich points out, these operations require lots of resources; a political party can provide economy of scale by helping candidates to pool resources. This allows them to reach out to far more voters than they would be able to on their own through the provision of the money and personnel to enable large-scale mobilization. Furthermore, political parties provide “branding” to a candidate, which in turn provides voters with information about the candidate quickly and cheaply. If, for example, a voter knows that a candidate is a Republican, the voter already knows a wealth of information about what that candidate's views and priorities likely are – in fact, many voters vote straight tickets (cast votes for candidates of the same party in every election).⁷

Bearing these incentives in mind, it is easy to see why political parties sprang into being not long after the birth of the American political system, even when two of the Founding Fathers, George Washington and James Madison, were initially strongly opposed to parties of any kind. In the late 1780's, James Madison co-authored the Federalist Papers, which made a case for the

⁶ Ordeshook, Peter C., Riker, William H. “A Theory of the Calculus of Voting”. *American Political Science Review* 62.01 (March 1968). pp. 25-42

⁷ Aldrich, pp. 45-50

ratification of the United States Constitution. In the tenth of these papers, Madison discusses the formation of political factions, and what can be done to prevent it.

In Federalist 10, Madison paints a picture of parties as inherently divisive and evil:

“A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts.”⁸

In the above passage, Madison claims that a political system comprised of two sufficiently motivated parties opposed to one another will tend towards gridlock, reasoning that both parties will prefer legislative stagnation over the opposing party's victory. This claim is substantiated by Sarah A. Binder in “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock”, in which the degree of gridlock in the American legislative system is measured empirically over fifty years and hypotheses regarding its cause are investigated. Binder finds that divided governments, that is to say Congresses which contain a roughly equal number of Democrats and

⁸ Madison, James. *The Federalist No. 10*. *Daily Advertiser*, Thursday, Nov. 22 1787.

Republicans, “are prone to higher levels of gridlock” and that “deadlock is more likely when the two parties split control of congress”⁹.

Madison also expresses a fear of the existence of a “majority faction”, which might use strength in numbers to exert its will, potentially treading upon the liberties of a powerless minority. In the end, Madison argues that the best way to combat the corrupting effects of parties is to prevent one single party from obtaining a majority, and instead encourage a multitude of smaller parties; he argues that the best form of government to this end is a representative democracy, encompassing as large an electorate as possible. A representative democracy, according to Madison, “refines and enlarges” the public’s views by filtering them through representatives who possessed “wisdom...patriotism and love of justice”; this relies on the ability of an active electorate to choose leaders who will be more devoted to the general public good than to the whims of any particular faction. Madison believed that a larger electorate had two effects – one, it allowed for fewer representatives per constituent (magnifying the “filtering” effect described above), and two, it guaranteed a larger and therefore more favorable pool of candidates for any given public office, increasing the chances of such a wise and just official being elected.¹⁰

However, despite these warnings and prescribed solutions, the federal government United States still managed to find itself embroiled in party politics within a decade of its inception. Aldrich notes an atmosphere of instability and chaos surrounding the First Congress (1789-1791); by the time of the Second Congress (1791-1793), most representatives identify

⁹ Binder, Sara A. “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock”, *American Political Science Review*, 93.03 (Sept. 1999). pp. 519-533.

¹⁰ Madison.

themselves as Federalists or Jeffersonian Republicans. By the Third Congress (1793-1795), party lines are easily identified.¹¹ Aldrich attributes this to the existence of the “great principle” – that is, the problem of how strong the federal government ought to be compared to the individual state governments. This “great principle” was considered by many (but not all) representatives to be the most important issue of the day, and was therefore the most polarizing one. Given its importance relative to other issues, representatives were more willing to compromise on lesser concerns and unite in favor of one side of the great principle or the other; knowing this, it is easy to view the problem as one of collective action, as described above. The existence of varying preferences among legislators, centered around one particularly weighty and divisive issue, created enough incentive for legislators to band together and form the first American political parties.

3 – Duverger’s Law

The political landscape of the United States is, and has generally been, dominated by a two-party system. For “third parties” intent on introducing new political ideas or reforms, this system is a detriment and has resulted in vastly disproportionate representation of members of these parties. For example, in the United States the Libertarian Party and the Independent Party each received over 1% of the total votes cast in the 2012 Congressional Election, but neither were awarded any seats in the House of Representatives (a body of 435 seats)¹². One of the chief obstacles for third parties, according to many political scientists, is that the United

¹¹ Aldrich, pp. 70-77.

¹² Ballot Access News, 1/1/13 – Volume 28, Number 8

States operate on a “majority” or “winner-take-all” electoral system – that is, for a given district, the candidate who receives the most votes (even if he does not receive a majority of the total votes) receives the political spoils (be it a House seat in the case Congressional elections, or that district’s electoral vote in the case of a Presidential election). The idea that this sort of electoral system discourages a multiparty system is commonly known among political scientists as Duverger’s Law, or Duverger’s hypothesis.

In his *Les Partis Politiques*, sociologist Maurice Duverger argues that the number of parties found within a state is directly related to the structure of the electoral system. In particular, Duverger found that states which employ the single-ballot majority vote tend to have a two-party system and that states which employ a double-ballot and/or proportional representation system tend to have a multi-party system. From these data, he formulated three sociological laws: (1) “a majority vote on one ballot is conducive to a two-party system”; (2) “proportional representation is conducive to a multiparty system; (3) “a majority vote on two ballots is conducive to a multiparty system, inclined toward forming coalitions”.¹³

Let us first define the electoral systems as Duverger cites them. A majority electoral system is a system in which only the candidate who has won the plurality (or relative majority) of votes is awarded any political office; this system is found in most elections in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. A proportional representation system (or PR system) is any in which the number of seats in a legislative body won by a political party is directly proportional to the number of votes received by that party; forms of PR are found in Israel,

¹³ Maurice Duverger, “Factors in a Two-Party and Multiparty System,” in *Party Politics and Pressure Groups* (New York: trans. Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), p. 23.

Finland, and Sweden. A double ballot or two-ballot system is one in which, if no party receives an absolute majority after one vote, a second vote is cast after eliminating parties which did not receive at least a certain percentage of the vote. Since this is a discussion of American Politics, we will focus primarily on the single-ballot majority system found in the United States.

There are a number of features of the majority vote system which tend to polarize voters toward a two-party system. One constraint of the majority vote system is that parties which are spread thin geographically are at a serious disadvantage; because only the winner in each district is awarded a seat, a party that may be widespread but not concentrated in a particular area or areas will find itself politically underrepresented. A particularly powerful example of this occurred during the 1992 presidential election, when Ross Perot's Reform Party claimed 19% of the popular vote, but did not win a single electoral vote¹⁴.

Another polarizing feature is the necessity for voters or even entire parties to compromise their ideologies in order to unite against common opponents. Duverger suggests an example in which 100,000 "moderate" voters oppose 80,000 "communist" voters in an election district. In this example, the moderates are divided into two parties, each supporting their own candidate, while the communists are united behind a single candidate¹⁵. In the face of both of these constraints, Duverger hypothesizes that minor parties have only two options: fusion and elimination.

Fusion is the practice of two political parties joining forces in order to obtain a greater number of votes than they would separately. In Duverger's example, this would be the case in

¹⁴ Leip, David. 1992 Presidential Election Results. Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections (August 7, 2005)

¹⁵ Duverger pp. 23-32.

which the two moderate parties decide to join forces and back a single candidate. Fusion was actually quite commonplace in the United States in the latter half of the 19th century, especially the case of a minor party fusing with one of the two mainstream parties for the presidential election. In the 1972 presidential election, the newly-formed Liberal Republican Party nominated Horace Greeley as its presidential candidate; the Democratic Party also nominated Greeley in order to avoid splitting the anti-Republican vote. In 1896, William Jennings Bryan was nominated as a presidential candidate by both the Democratic Party and the Populist Party. Furthermore, fusion has been a common practice in state-level and local elections throughout the 20th century; two notable examples are California's 1946 gubernatorial candidate Earl Warren winning the nominations of the Democratic, Republican, and Progressive parties, and Alan Shivers appearing on both the Democratic and Republican tickets for the 1952 Texas gubernatorial race. However, fusion suffered a major setback in 1997 with the Supreme Court case *Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party*, in which the court decided 6-3 to uphold a Minnesota ban on electoral fusion.¹⁶

Elimination is the condition in which a minor party's supporters desert it for a larger, more formidable party, effectively "eliminating" the former. In Duverger's scenario, this would be the case in which the weaker of the two moderate parties is abandoned in favor of the party more likely to win. One notable example of this in American Politics is the Progressive Party (also known as the "Bull Moose" Party) which, after disappointing election results in the early twentieth century, disintegrated in 1916 as its members all sought Republican and Democratic

¹⁶ Howard A. Scarrow, "Duverger's Law, Fusion, and the Decline of American 'Third' Parties", *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Dec., 1986), pp. 634-647.

nominations. Duverger also offers the example of the Liberal Party in Great Britain, which went from possessing an absolute majority of Parliamentary seats in 1902 to possessing only six after the general election of 1951 due to schisms over the National Government coalition in the 1930's when a bulk of the party broke off as National Liberals, and later merged with the Conservative Party (though the party was later revived, at the time Duverger wrote *Les Partis Politiques* the party had been effectively eliminated)¹⁷.

Duverger's hypothesis is by no means absolute, or without exception. In India, there are currently 38 political parties represented in their Parliament, despite the fact that they possess a winner-take-all system¹⁸. This has been explained by the discrepancy between national- and district-level politics; each individual district in India tends to have between two and three active parties, but not all districts have the same parties. As a result, a much greater number of parties obtain seats in the lower house of the Indian Parliament, the Lok Sabha¹⁹. In the United Kingdom, where a similar system exists, the Liberal Democratic Party has managed to consistently obtain between 15% and 25% of the popular vote, and roughly one tenth of Parliamentary seats²⁰. This has been attributed to the geographic concentration of Liberal Democratic voters in the "Celtic Fringe" (comprised of Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall); because Liberal voters are clustered into a small number of districts, they are able to swing the vote in those districts and win parliamentary seats in a manner that would be impossible if Liberal

¹⁷Schlesinger and Schlesinger, "Maurice Duverger and the Study of Political Parties", *French Politics*, 2006, 4, (58-68)

¹⁸ Lok Sabha Official Website (<http://loksabha.nic.in/>)

¹⁹ Chhibber, Pradeep and Kollman, Ken. "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States". *The American Political Science Review*, 92.02 (Jun. 1998). pp. 329-342.

²⁰ Electoral Reform Website (<http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/>)

Democrats were spread throughout the country²¹. In Canada, while the Senate is solidly two-party, the House of Commons currently represents no fewer than seven political parties, with three of them in possession of greater than a tenth of total seats²². This case has been investigated by Johnston and Cutler, who found that the multi-partism at the federal level appears to be caused by a “steady diffusion of local three-party competition”, the cause of which is a matter of contention²³.

However, especially as applied to the United States, Duverger’s Law has served as an accurate and useful explanation of the immense challenges facing third parties. It suggests that in order for third parties to gain a foothold in the American political system, electoral reforms must do away with the single-ballot majority system in favor of a double ballot or PR system. Failing that, it suggests that American third parties must look to outliers such as India and Canada as examples.

4 – Psychological Obstacles to Third Parties

In addition to the institutional obstacles presented by Duverger’s Law, there are two main psychological factors which contribute to the dominion of a two-party system in American politics: the process of political socialization, and the “wasted vote” mentality.

²¹ MacAllister, Ian, Fieldhouse, Eric, and Russell, Andrew. “Yellow Fever? The Political Geography of Liberal voting in Great Britain”. *Political Geography*, 21.04 (May 2002). pp. 421-447.

²² Canadian Parliament Official Website

(<http://www.parl.gc.ca/MembersOfParliament/MainMPsCompleteList.aspx?Language=E&TimePeriod=Current>)

²³ Johnston, Richard and Cutler, Fred. "Canada: The Puzzle of Local Three-Party Competition" in B. Grofman, A. Blais, S. Bowler, eds. *Duverger’s Law of Plurality Voting*. New York: Springer, 2009. pp. 83-96.

Author Edward Greenburg defines political socialization as “the process by which the individual acquires attitudes, beliefs and values relating to the political system of which he is a member and to his own role as a citizen within that political system”²⁴. This process, which has been extensively studied by political scientists, can be influenced by several agents: schools, church, the work place, and even the mass media. However, it is generally agreed upon that the most significant agent of political socialization is one’s family, and one’s parents in particular.

In particular, the family plays an important role in the specific party identification of an individual during adolescence. Political scientist Fred Greenstein observes that the learning of political behavior seems to be prevalingly affective rather than cognitive; for example, Greenstein writes that “Children acquire party attachments before they can make more than the most fragmentary distinctions about the nature of political parties, about what the parties stand for, even about who the parties’ public representatives are.”²⁵ Michael A. Krasner further explains that “the earliest political learning occurs in the family...Children pick up and acquire knowledge and beliefs from their parents...Children also tend to acquire their parents’ party allegiance, especially if the mother and father agree. It used to be that nearly 75 percent adopted the same party as their parents, but more recent studies indicate that only 60% do.”²⁶

This affective socialization has negative consequences for third parties in that it has a conservative effect on the political system. Greenstein offers that “Socialization processes foster the *status quo* through the perpetuation of class and sex differences in political

²⁴ Greenberg, Edward S. *Political Socialization*. New York: Atherton, 1970. p.3

²⁵ Greenstein, Fred I. *Children and Politics*. Yale University Press, 1965. p.154

²⁶ Krasner, Michael A., Chaberski, Stephen G, and Jones, D. Kelly. *American Government: Structure and Process*. New York: MacMillan, 1977. pp. 229,234

participation, continuity between the generations in party preferences, continuation (and perhaps even strengthening) of adult assessments of the relative importance of political institutions.”²⁷ This “self-fulfilling, self-perpetuating process”, as Smallwood observes, has enabled the two established parties – Democrats and Republicans – to maintain their relative importance to the political system.²⁸

A second psychological factor disadvantageous to third parties is the “wasted vote” thesis. Smallwood explains the thesis: “Public opinion studies have indicated that a sizable number of Americans who prefer a third-party candidate actually cast their presidential ballots for one of the two major parties because they are afraid of wasting their votes and enabling the other major-party candidate to win the election.”²⁹ Duverger himself was a proponent of this thesis, observing that electors tend to “transfer their vote to the less evil of its two adversaries in order to prevent the success of the greater evil”.³⁰

The “wasted vote” thesis has been extensively studied; Abramson et al. examine the 1988 presidential primaries, and find strong evidence for “sophisticated voting” – that is, not simply voting for one’s preferred candidate but rather calculating (consciously or not) for which candidate a vote would carry the highest expected utility. One aspect of sophisticated voting is the determination to what degree one’s vote will affect the outcome of an election, and if the preferred candidate is unlikely to win, the voter will turn away from that option.³¹ Former

²⁷ Greenstein, p.158

²⁸ Smallwood, Frank. *The Other Candidates: Third Parties in Presidential Elections*, Dartmouth College Press, 1983, p. 8

²⁹ Smallwood, p. 9

³⁰ Duverger, *Political Parties*, p.226

³¹ Abramson, Paul R. et al. “‘Sophisticated’ Voting in the 1988 Presidential Primaries”. *American Political Science Review* Vol. 86, No. 1, Mar., 1992. pp. 55-69

Socialist Party presidential nominee Norman Thomas highlights how this mentality can be used by major parties to sway independent voters towards voting for mainstream candidates; Thomas insists that the major parties deliberately used this strategy to persuade voters, and that 1924 Progressive and Socialist Party candidate Robert LaFollette lost “hundreds of thousands of votes” this way.³²

5 – Most Successful Third Party Bids

The history of third-party politics in the United States is by and large a history of obscurity punctuated by several unsuccessful challenges to the presidency. Since Reconstruction and the solidification of the modern two-party system in the United States, there have been five third-party presidential bids which have stood out from the rest: William Jennings Bryan’s Populist bid of 1896, Teddy Roosevelt’s “Bull Moose” bid of 1912, Robert LaFollette’s Progressive bid of 1924, George Wallace’s American Independent bid of 1968, and Ross Perot’s independent bid of 1992.

In the 1890’s, the Populist Party formed when the leaders of several agricultural organizations (including the Agricultural Wheel and the Knights of Labor) met to discuss a new political party that would serve the needs of the farmers. It gained widespread support in the Midwest and Southwest among farmers who felt that both major political parties were corrupt and hostile to small farmers’ needs³³. The Populist platform was also heavily focused on the

³² Thomas, Norman. *A Socialist’s Faith*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1951. p. 93

³³ Hild, Matthew (2007). *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists, Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South*. The University of Georgia Press, Athens & London, p. 123.

issue of currency and the gold standard, as well as advocating for popular election of United States Senators and a graduated income tax³⁴. In 1892, the party achieved mild success in the presidential election when their candidate, James B. Weaver, received over a million popular votes and carried four states: Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, and Nevada.

In 1896, the Populist Party was poised to nominate William Jennings Bryan, a young Nebraska congressman of the populist wing of the Democratic Party. However, the Democrats recognized the burgeoning wave of populism sweeping the western states, and before the Populist Party could claim Bryan, he received the Democratic Party's nomination. Because he afterwards received the nominations of both the Populist Party and the Silver Republican Party, his presidential campaign is considered an example of electoral fusion. Scholars have observed that the Democrats' preemptive nomination is not an uncommon move; one political scientist notes that the major parties have a tendency to "[move] almost instinctively to absorb (and thus be somewhat reshaped by) the most challenging third party of the time"³⁵. Pushing back against this fusion, the Populists rejected the Democrats' choice of Vice President, Arthur Sewall, and chose their own candidate: a Georgia Senator named Thomas Watson. In the end, Bryan received nearly six and a half million votes – not enough to defeat Republican contender William McKinley; Watson received less than a quarter million votes for Vice President. Bryan and Watson's votes were generally concentrated in the Southeast and Deep South (South Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, etc.) and the Rocky Mountains area (Colorado, Nevada, Idaho). This defeat greatly damaged the Populist Party; though Bryan ran for President again in 1900 – and

³⁴ Smallwood, Frank. *The Other Candidates: Third Parties in Presidential Elections*, Dartmouth College Press, 1983, pp. 8-9.

³⁵ Rossiter, Clinton. *Parties and Politics in America*, Cornell University Press, 1960, p. 73.

received much Populist support – this again resulted in defeat and the Populist Party was disbanded that year.

In 1912, former president Theodore Roosevelt became disillusioned with the policies then-president William Howard Taft. Roosevelt was a champion of the Republican Party's liberal wing, and was disappointed in Taft, feeling that he had become too conservative. Roosevelt decided to seek reelection in the 1912 presidential race; although he polled consistently higher than Taft, it was Taft who controlled the Republican Party and the convention, which promptly re-nominated him³⁶.

In response, Roosevelt founded the Progressive Party the day after the convention. The party took its more well-known name, the "Bull Moose" Party, from a speech given by Roosevelt mere minutes after an assassination attempt on his life, in which he famously remarked "It takes more than that to kill a bull moose."³⁷ The Progressive platform was built on reform, stricter regulation of corporations, women's suffrage, and popular election of senators.

Roosevelt's campaign was unsuccessful – he won over four million popular votes and 88 electoral votes, outperforming Taft but not Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson. Having won 27% of the popular vote, Roosevelt's is considered the most successful third-party campaign in the history of the presidency. He carried six states: California, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Washington. Some historians attribute Roosevelt's

³⁶ *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U. S. elections*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc. 1985. pp. 75, 387–388

³⁷ <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/research/speech%20kill%20moose.htm>

loss to the campaigns shortage of money, and also to the fact that Roosevelt was running for his third term, challenging the unspoken “two-term limit” on the presidency³⁸.

The “Bull Moose” Progressives faded out after the 1912 election (a few were elected to the House of Representatives, but later rejoined the Republican Party). However, Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin later formed a new Progressive Party in 1924 – he had been an original organizer of the 1912 Progressive Party, but opposed Roosevelt after Roosevelt assumed control of the party.

The 1924 Progressive platform called for public ownership of railroads, and supported the rights of small farmers and laborers. The party ran LaFollette for president in the 1924 election with his running mate, Democratic Senator Burton K. Wheeler. LaFollette and Wheeler came in third with 17% of the popular vote, carrying only Wisconsin (and winning several districts in North Dakota, Minnesota, and the Rocky Mountain states. Following the election, the new Progressive Party disbanded.

This began a period of over forty years of third-party obscurity; following LaFollette’s run, there were no notable third-party presidential challenges until the 1968 presidential campaign of Alabama Governor George Wallace, on the ticket of the American Independent Party. In the mid-1960’s, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society program represented a surge of Democratic ideals in Congress; it addressed racial injustice, education, and other areas which were in need of reform. Governor Wallace represented a less-liberal faction of the Democratic Party whose pro-segregation views were being pushed out of the mainstream.

³⁸ *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U. S. elections*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc. 1985. p. 295

In response to the Great Society policies, Wallace helped to found the American Independent Party. Their platform was primarily opposition to desegregation, but Wallace also took a stand on foreign policy; Wallace alone of all the candidates pledged an immediate withdrawal of all troops in Vietnam if the war was not winnable within 90 days of his inauguration³⁹. He also began to stir dissatisfaction with both major parties, famously remarking “There’s not a dime’s worth of difference between the Democrat and Republican parties”⁴⁰.

Wallace’s campaign was run with essentially one issue in mind: segregation. Wallace knew that he had no chance of winning the presidency, but had hoped that he would receive enough electoral votes so that the House of Representatives would be forced to decide the election and legislators from Southern States could use that leverage to end federal efforts at desegregation.⁴¹ The election results, however, did not favor Wallace. He carried five states in the Deep South (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi) and won several districts in Florida, Virginia and the Carolinas, but came away with only 46 electoral votes (to Democratic Humphrey’s 191 and Republican Nixon’s 301). Not long after, segregation was ended; the American Independent Party split in 1976 into the moderate American Party and the more radical American Independent Party.

The most recent, and perhaps most relevant, challenge of the two-party electoral system was the 1992 presidential election in which billionaire Ross Perot ran for president as an

³⁹ Kauffman, Bill (2008-05-19). When the Left Was Right, *The American Conservative*

⁴⁰ Diamond, Sara (1995). *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press. pp. 142–146.

⁴¹ Miller, William (1968) (paperback). *A New History of the United States* (New Revised ed.). Dell Publishing. p. 485.

independent candidate (without officially running on any party ticket). In the early 1990's, dissatisfaction with the two major parties was rampant; by the time of the presidential race, 37% of Americans considered themselves "independent", or unaffiliated with either major party⁴². It was in this environment that Texas businessman Ross Perot announced that he would be running for president as an independent. His platform centered on the common frustrations of voters at the time: balancing the federal budget, expansion of the war on drugs, and advocacy of the EPA, among other issues⁴³.

The campaign started off promisingly – some polls in Texas and California showed Perot leading both major candidates in May of 1992. However, the campaign hit a decline in July, as his opponents tried to highlight some of Perot's gaffes and past actions. Furthermore, Perot began to seem more authoritarian in his running of the campaign, requiring volunteers to sign loyalty oaths⁴⁴. Amid falling poll numbers and a disillusioned staff, Perot withdrew his nomination on July 16th, encouraging his supporters to find other candidates to support.

However, Perot unexpectedly reentered the presidential running on the first of October, leveraging his way into all three presidential debates and performing well. This was not enough, unfortunately; the election results awarded Perot nearly 19 million popular votes, but not a single electoral vote. His support was widespread, polling between 10% and 30% in nearly every state. His best numbers were in the Rocky Mountain area, the Midwest, and the Pacific

⁴² "Gallup Politics: Record-High 40% of Americans Identify as Independents in '11". 2012-01-09.

⁴³ "The Pew Research Center for People & the Press: Year of the Outsider". 1992-06-16.

⁴⁴ "Perot asks volunteers to sign loyalty oaths". [St. Petersburg Times](#). Associated Press (St. Petersburg, Florida): p. 2A. July 14, 1992.

Northwest; he came in second in Utah and third in every other state⁴⁵. Following the 1992 election, Perot helped to form the Reform Party, a party which united voters dissatisfied with the two-party system, as well as the increasing national debt. Perot ran for president again in 1996, this time polling only eight percent of the popular vote.

While Duverger's Law is still very much in effect in the American Political system, and despite a long history of failed third-party bids at the presidency, there are some scholars and analysts who believe that the nation is on the brink of an overturning of the two-party system, particularly since the rise of the Reform Party in the 1990's. Micah Silfry observes "deep turbulence in the American electorate", claiming that "the Democratic and Republican parties are not as solid or dominant as they seem"⁴⁶. Notably, Jacqueline Salit, a political commentator and president of IndependentVoting.org (a strategy and organization center for independent voters) predicts the advent of a "post-partisan" American political system. Salit observes a rising independent population in the United States; currently, forty percent of voters consider themselves independents, the highest proportion in over seventy years⁴⁷. Salit also notes that the voting behavior of independents over the past several election cycles has swung back and forth between the two major parties, tending to vote against the party currently "in power"; the majority of independents voted for President Bush in 2004, but voted in a Democratic Congress in 2006 – they voted for President Barack Obama in 2008 but then voted for a

⁴⁵ ["1992 Presidential General Election Data – National"](#).

<http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/data.php?year=1992&datatype=national&def=1&f=0&off=0&elect=0>

⁴⁶ Silfry, Micah L. *Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America*. Routledge, New York, 2002. p. 44

⁴⁷ Salit, Jacqueline S. *Independents Rising: Outside Movements, Third Parties, and the Struggle for a Post-Partisan America*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2012. p. 1.

predominantly Republican Congress in 2010.⁴⁸ This speaks to an electorate deeply unsatisfied with both major parties, grasping at change wherever they think they might be able to affect it. In fact, as of 2011, 81% of American voters surveyed responded that they are dissatisfied with the way the nation is being governed.⁴⁹ According to Salit, one major step towards overthrowing the two-party system is through primary reform; currently, twenty-eight of the United States have closed or semi-closed presidential primaries (closed meaning that only registered party members can vote in that party's primary, and semi-closed meaning that unregistered voters may vote but not voters in the opposing party)⁵⁰. Salit asserts that closed primaries inhibit the democratic process by excluding a sizable percentage of the electorate from the process of choosing candidates, resulting in a roster of candidates that may be unfavorable to a majority of voters. In order to combat the two-party system, Salit claims that it is currently most advantageous for independent voters to achieve their immediate goals not by allying with a "third party", but by remaining unaffiliated and therefore unified by being "outsiders". However, she argues that once serious reforms take place (namely in the way that primaries are held), the American two-party system may be overcome by a "new kind of party", which would represent a real power shift and would need to have "roots in the independent movement that is evolving and a connection to its leaders, its infrastructure, and its issues".⁵¹

⁴⁸ Salit, pp. 8-14.

⁴⁹ King, Neil. "Antsy Voters Look for a Third Way". *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 26, 2011.

⁵⁰ Bowman, Ann. *State and Local Government: The Essentials*. Boston, MA. 2012. p. 77.

⁵¹ Salit, p.184.

6 – Overcoming Obstacles to Third-Party Success

Having enumerated several obstacles to the success of third-party political endeavors, and detailed several of the relatively more successful cases in the history of the United States, I propose three suggestions for increasing the probability of victory for a third-party presidential candidate.

Firstly and chiefly, Duverger's Law must be overcome (or at least compensated for) in order to achieve any semblance of victory. I present a twofold solution: geographically focused campaigning, and political fusion. By geographically focused, I mean that one should devote more resources to campaigning and winning votes in smaller geographic regions, as opposed to spending the same amount of resources to achieve the same number of votes over a broader area. Given America's winner-take-all system, it is far more advantageous to have the majority of votes in a small number of districts than a minority of votes in a large number of districts – the former may result in the awarding of electoral votes, while the latter (as seen in the case of Perot's 1992 campaign) awards nothing. By focusing a campaign in geographically small but largely populated areas (cities, primarily), a candidate will make every vote won by campaigning count towards a greater likelihood of winning electoral votes. The anomalous condition of the Indian lower house, the Lok Sabha, speaks to the effectiveness of this tactic for winning legislative seats. In addition, a third-party candidate should take advantage of political fusion – not with one of the two major parties, as in the cases of Earl Warren or Alan Shivers, but rather with other "third parties", as with the case of Bryan in 1896 (though Bryan won the Democratic nomination, he also had the support of both the Populist and Silver Republican Parties). Just as

the divisive issue of federal versus state power was responsible for the initial formation of parties during early sessions of Congress, frustration with the two major parties can be framed as such an issue around which voters may orient themselves.

Secondly, the “wasted vote” mentality can also be overcome simply by framing the problem as a cognitive bias. Diversity Best Practices, an organization devoted to sharing solutions for problems of prejudice and affecting culture change, has found that the first and most important step toward overcoming unconscious bias (such as the bias against candidates less likely to win, even though they may be the preferred candidate) is to become aware that the bias exists⁵². A campaign advertisement directed at undecided voters that makes a note of this particular phenomenon and encourages voters to vote sincerely rather than strategically could be effective at winning voters who may have otherwise considered their vote a waste.

Finally, as per Jacqueline Salit’s suggestion, a third-party candidate should take advantage of the current anti-partisan sentiment, and the existing infrastructure of independent voters across the nation. Organizations such as IndependentVoters.org can be used to mobilize independent voters against the two major parties, and resources such as Salit’s *The Neo-Independent* magazine might be used to target an audience sympathetic to any party which might upset the two-party equilibrium.

⁵² “Proven Strategies for Addressing Unconscious Bias in the Workplace”. CDOInsights, Vol.2 Issue 5. p. 5. <http://www.cookcross.com/docs/UnconsciousBias.pdf>

7 – Hypothetical Third Party Campaign Material

In demonstration of the above suggestions, I created a body of hypothetical campaign material for a potential third-party candidate with an anti-partisan platform. The party (called the “Change Party of America”) and the candidate (aptly named John Doe) are entirely fictional and not based upon any existing party or person. Furthermore, I chose not to create a detailed platform for this party, as I wanted any survey respondents to judge whether or not they would support such a party based not upon positions on currently relevant political issues, but upon the persuasiveness of the party’s argument for the support of a third-party candidate in the current American political system.

I present the following campaign materials: a script for a TV campaign ad (found in Appendix A), and the candidate’s acceptance speech of his party’s nomination (found in Appendix B).

8 – Survey of American Voters

In order to assess the effectiveness of the campaign materials, I constructed a survey (found in Appendix C) which asked respondents several questions, including whether they would vote for a third party presidential candidate if said candidate’s political beliefs were exactly in line with theirs. I then had respondents read the campaign materials, and asked them whether they would vote for John Doe, and whether they were more likely to vote for a third party candidate as a result of reading the materials.

Because the survey was administered online with the aid of social media, the sample is small (88 responses) and somewhat skewed toward younger voters. However, even with this in mind, the survey yielded some interesting results.

Of the 88 respondents, 60% voted for Barack Obama in the 2012 election, 20% voted for Mitt Romney, and 9% voted for a third-party candidate (the rest either did not vote or declined to answer). Despite this, true to Gallup's results, more than 40% of respondents did not consider themselves identified with any particular party (it should be noted that among respondents, Obama voters and Romney voters were equally likely to have no party affiliation). Fewer than half of respondents indicated that the candidate for whom they voted agreed with most or all of their political beliefs, and 18% of respondents said they voted for the "least-awful" candidate. When asked why they believe that American politics is dominated by two major parties, only five respondents indicated some understanding of Duverger's Law (mentioning "winner-take-all", "first-past-the-post", etc.) in their answer. The majority responded that third parties do not have enough capital to compete with the gargantuan major parties, or that American voters naturally polarize issues into two distinct camps ending up with only two different platforms, or simply that the two-party system is an American tradition.

One of the most striking results of the survey was the distribution of responses to the question "If there existed a third party candidate who agreed with most or all of your political beliefs, would you vote for them in a presidential election, even if they remained unaffiliated with either major party?" This question was meant to distinguish sincere voting (indicated by an affirmative response) and strategic voting (indicated by a negative response). Fewer than half

(47%) of respondents indicated that they would vote sincerely, and the rest indicated that they would vote strategically. When prompted for a reason, nearly all strategic voters said that they were afraid of “wasting their vote”. Of the sincere voters, many said that even if the candidate stands little chance of winning, their vote serves to “show support” and perhaps raise awareness of that candidate so they might stand a better chance in the future; many also said that they “care more about the person than the party”, which is consistent with Salit’s thesis that Americans are moving toward post-partisanship. Furthermore, 66% of respondents indicated a strong dissatisfaction with the two-party system as a reliable producer of competent officeholders.

At this point in the survey, respondents were presented with the campaign materials for John Doe and the “Change Party of America”. Having read the advertisement script and the speech, 40% of respondents indicated that they would vote for John Doe based solely upon these materials. Some of the reasons for voting for Doe included:

- “I agree with eliminating partisanship from politics.”
- “John Doe speaks the truth and does so in an articulate manner. His word choice is inspiring and resonates with leadership.”
- “If polling showed that he had a significant political following, and if the ideological balance of the supreme court seemed stable for a reasonable time period, I would be likely to vote for a candidate who specifically identified against the polarized nature of party-politics in favor of a more nuanced, thoughtful and responsible stewardship of national power.”
- “I am frustrated with the way the federal government is being run and with the [gridlock] of the two party system.”

Those among the 60% of respondents who would not vote for John Doe generally indicated one of two reasons; the majority said that they would need to know more about Doe's political leanings before they would commit their vote, and the rest said that Doe did not do enough to convince them that a third party vote would not be a waste.

Finally, respondents were asked if the materials made them more likely to vote for a third party candidate in the future. Of the respondents who, on the earlier question, indicated that they would be likely to vote for a third party candidate whose views reflected their own, over 50% said that they were more likely to vote for third party candidates in future elections. Of the respondents who indicated that they would not vote for a third party candidate whose views reflected their own, 26% (twelve respondents) said that they were more likely to vote for third party candidates in future elections. Since it is possible that these twelve may have been persuaded by the campaign materials (and have thus confirmed the effectiveness of their rhetoric) to vote for a third-party candidate in a future election, their responses are of the most interest.

Here are some of the reasons cited by these twelve respondents as to why the materials made them more likely to vote for a third party:

- "If ads like this started airing regularly and polls were showing support for a third party, I'd be much more likely to take them seriously."
- "If I felt she/he was garnering enough public support to have a fighting chance, and if a certain level of realism regarding the difficulty of such a massive change for America were addressed, I would consider voting."
- "Well this also seems like one of the first third party candidates that isn't super right or super left...it makes sense to choose someone who is pretty moderate."
- "If they had a shot of winning, I absolutely would."

9 – Analysis of Survey Responses

Despite the small sample size, the survey data is telling; there are three main conclusions which can be drawn from the survey.

Firstly, that most voters do not make the connection between two-party dominance and the winner-take-all voting system described by Duverger – most respondents simply chalked the two-party dominance up to lack of third-party funding, or even to American tradition, saying simply that it has always been this way and that political systems are resistant to change. While these are both factors that currently contribute to the two-party dominance in America, Duverger’s Law is ultimately responsible and is enforced by the American winner-take-all electoral system. Given the dissatisfaction with the two-party system that most respondents indicated, it is possible that more widespread awareness of Duverger’s Law and its implications could encourage a push to replace America’s winner-take-all system.

Secondly, that the “wasted vote mentality” is the most significant factor preventing voters from supporting third-party candidates in the current system. To remedy this, inspiration can be taken from the reasons given by respondents who said that they would vote for third-parties: namely, that a vote for a third-party candidate shows visible support, gives a more accurate indication of voters’ preferences in polls, and makes it easier for third-party candidates to gain traction. A persuasive advertisement encouraging that voters consider this rationale when voting could potentially convince some voters to support third-party candidates whose views reflect their own more accurately than candidates from either major party.

Finally, that the primary reason for the campaign materials' success in persuading voters (other than the rhetoric of John Doe) was the idea that the advertisement and speech would be spread far and wide, reaching a large number of voters, and would therefore be able to garner critical support. The survey seems to indicate that many voters' support of a third-party candidate is almost entirely contingent upon the candidate's existing support base being both widespread and very visible – enough to convince the voter that their preferred candidate has a realistic chance of winning. With this in mind, it could be said that any third-party candidate who does not attain a high level of national awareness and visibility, preferably very early on (before campaign season, when the airwaves are dominated by the major parties' advertisements), will not succeed or even come close to success in the presidential election. This is easy to compensate for if one's campaign is financed by a billionaire such as Ross Perot, but with the limited funding often afforded third parties, a national television ad campaign would likely remain out of reach. However, the rising ubiquity of internet advertising may provide a cost-effective method of reaching a large number of voters with relatively little funding. Therefore, my suggestion would be to investigate the use of the internet, social media, and viral marketing in order to create a vocal and widespread base of support, and to do so well before campaign season.

10 – Conclusions

As confirmed by the survey, third-party candidates face a mire of obstacles to the presidency; not least of these is the fact that, as the survey has shown, even if a voter agrees entirely with the candidate's platform, they are only about 50% likely to vote for them, out of fear of throwing their vote away. Even aggressively appealing to voters' dissatisfaction with two-party dominance can only accomplish so much unless the candidate in question has a widely visible support base to begin with.

However, I contend that these obstacles are not impossible to overcome; as previously mentioned, fewer and fewer people identify as a member of either major party, and (as Salit asserts) this nation appears to be moving in a direction favoring independent candidates. With Ross Perot's 1992 campaign serving as a fairly recent example of how frustration with major parties can propel a third-party candidate towards victory, it is not difficult to imagine a future in which the current trend towards an electorate that eschews both Democrats and Republicans might continue until a third-party candidate is able to achieve the critical mass that Perot very nearly had.

In conclusion, I offer the following actionable suggestions for any third party presidential campaign:

- Campaign most heavily in geographically small areas with high population density, concentrating support in order to win individual districts (countering the "winner-take-all" system).

- Encourage voters that a vote for a third-party candidate is not a “wasted vote” because it helps to better represent the values and preferences of the electorate, and makes preferred candidates more likely to do better in future elections.
- Appeal to voters’ dissatisfaction with the two-party system, making partisan gridlock a central campaign issue, and enlist the help of anti-partisan and independent organizations in order to obtain early support.
- Connect two-party dominance with the winner-take-all electoral system (essentially, raise awareness of Duverger’s Law) and encourage voters that one way to combat such dominance is to advocate for a change in the electoral system.
- Utilize the internet and social media in order to reach the largest amount of people possible for the smallest amount of money, and begin to campaign in this manner well before election season starts.

Appendix A: Change Party Campaign Television Spot

(VOICEOVER speaks over footage of Congress in session)

VOICEOVER: Are you frustrated with the way the federal government is being run? You're not alone. Recent polls show that more than 80% of Americans are dissatisfied with both the Democratic and Republican Parties.

(show visual of poll numbers, followed by images of recent third party candidates such as Jill Stein, Gary Johnson, etc.)

VOICEOVER: Despite this, many Americans believe that to cast a ballot for a third party candidate would be throwing away a vote. As a result, voters have avoided third-party candidates in recent elections, and instead voted for the Democratic or Republican candidate.

(show video of Barack Obama and George W. Bush giving campaign speeches side by side)

VOICEOVER: In 2000 and 2004, the majority independent voters cast their votes for George W. Bush. In 2008 and 2012, independents grew tired with Bush's Republican administration and played a critical role in electing Barack Obama. However, the American people are no more satisfied with the way this nation is run than they were twelve years ago. Will the cycle of Democratic and Republican dominance never end?

(enter candidate JOHN DOE, speaking in front of a banner of the Change Party of America)

JOHN DOE: Hello; I'm presidential nominee John Doe. I speak not just on behalf of the Change Party of America, but on behalf of any American who is fed up with the two-party dominance

that has plagued this nation for decades and has brought political progress to a near standstill. Instead of pandering only to those Americans affiliated with a particular political organization, I will weigh all options and opinions, and strive to do right by all Americans, no matter what party they may identify themselves. Instead of opposing political action simply because it came from an opposing party, I will reach out to both sides of the aisle and focus on solutions rather than partisan ideology. This nation is ready for a president who will put people ahead of politics, and patriotism ahead of partisanship. I'm John Doe, and I am the candidate that this nation needs.

(show a visual of George W. Bush beside Barack Obama, with the text "Don't throw your vote away." This fades to a picture of John Doe, and text that reads "Vote for Change. Vote for John Doe.")

VOICEOVER: Paid for by the Change Party of America and IndependentVoters.org

(fade to black)

Appendix B: John Doe Acceptance Speech

I am deeply humbled and profoundly moved by the honor you have bestowed on me today. I gladly and proudly accept this nomination.

I do so not on behalf of myself, nor on behalf of only those who happen to share my political opinions or religious beliefs. I accept this nomination not for the purpose of advancing a particular agenda, nor the purpose of promoting a particular way of life.

I accept this nomination on behalf of an electorate whose cries for change have gone unheeded by officeholders in the federal government for far too long. I accept this nomination for the purpose of reforming this broken political system, and reshaping it into an instrument of the will of the American people.

For too long, the holder of the highest office in the land has represented, in name, not the entirety, but only a subset of Americans. For too long, Congress has been spinning its wheels, as Democrats blindly oppose any legislation introduced by a Republican, and Republicans blindly oppose any legislation introduced by a Democrat. For too long, the focus of officeholders in this country has been partisanship, forsaking compromise for exclusion, when the focus *should* be inclusion, and progress, and the will of the people.

America is ready for a president with no ties to either of the two parties that have dominated the political landscape of this country for over a century. America is ready for a president who will not doggedly hold the party line even in the face of sound logic and reason, but will bend

when it is required of him, so as to better serve all Americans, not just those who happen to agree with him.

If I am elected, I promise to be that president. And with your help, ladies and gentlemen, I *will* be that president.

Appendix C: Survey of American Voters

1. Which of the following statements is most accurate?
 - a. I consider myself a Democrat.
 - b. I consider myself a Republican.
 - c. I do not consider myself affiliated with any political party.
 - d. I am affiliated with a “third” party (please provide party name)
 - e. Decline to answer

2. If you were eligible to vote in the 2012 Presidential Election, for which candidate did you cast your vote?
 - a. Mitt Romney
 - b. Barack Obama
 - c. Other, third-party candidate
 - d. I didn’t vote
 - e. Decline to answer

3. If you voted in the 2012 Presidential Election, which of the following statements is most accurate?
 - a. The candidate I voted for agrees with all or most of my political beliefs.
 - b. The candidate I voted for does not agree with all or most of my political beliefs, but was better than all other alternatives.
 - c. I voted for the least-awful candidate.

4. Which of the following statements are most accurate?
 - a. I was acutely aware of the third-party candidates and their platforms in the 2012 election.
 - b. I was familiar with some of the third-party candidates in the 2012 election, but did not pay much attention to them.
 - c. I was not at all aware of the third-party candidates in the 2012 election.

5. Why do you believe that American Presidential elections are comprised mainly of only two parties (as opposed to several)?

- a. (provide space for answer)

Here are some of the third-party candidates who ran in the 2012 Presidential Election:

-Gary Johnson, Libertarian Party

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_Party_\(United_States\)#Platform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_Party_(United_States)#Platform))

-Jill Stein, Green Party (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Party_of_the_United_States)

-Virgil Goode, Constitution Party

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_Party_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_Party_(United_States)))

-Rocky Anderson, Justice Party ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_Party_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_Party_(United_States)))

6. If there existed a third party candidate who agreed with most or all of your political beliefs, would you vote for them in a presidential election, even if they remained unaffiliated with either major party? (Be as honest as you can.)

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

7. Why or why not?

- a. (provide space for answer)

8. Which of the following statements would you say is most accurate?

- a. The two-party system is the best possible political system for awarding offices to competent officials.
- b. The two-party system is adequate for awarding offices to competent officials.
- c. The two-party system is detrimental to the awarding of offices to competent officials.
- d. Other

Please read the following two documents, and then answer the questions that follow. The first document is the script of a TV ad, paid for by a fictional political party, the Change Party of America, to promote a fictional presidential candidate, John Doe. The second document is John

Doe's hypothetical acceptance speech of the presidential nomination on the Change Party ticket.

(include TV ad script and speech)

9. Based solely upon the material provided above, would you vote for John Doe?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. Why or why not?

- a. (provide space for answer)

11. Would you say you are more likely to vote for a third party candidate in a presidential election, having read the ad and the speech?

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. Why or why not?

- a. (provide space for answer)