

Activists

Overview

- How active is the American public
- Reasons for becoming an activist
- What are the characteristics of activists
- New model of party activists

Trends in Level of Activism

- American National Election Studies (NES)
 - <http://www.umich.edu/~nes>
- The NES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior

Reasons for Activism

- Tangible or material incentives
 - Patronage
 - Elective office seekers
 - Job contacts
- Social (Solidary) incentives
 - Meet new people
 - Sustain old friendships
 - Hobby

Reasons for Activism

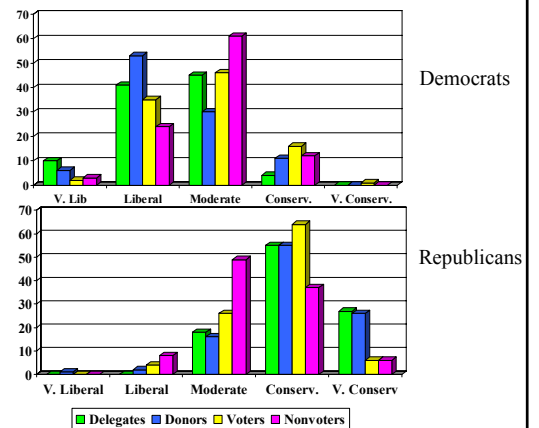
- Policy advocates (Purposive)
 - Issue or ideology
 - Group advancement
- Family socialization
- Overall pattern
 - Multiple reasons
 - Policy most frequent
 - Reasons vary by time and locality

Recruitment of Activists

- Recruited by others
- Self recruitment

Characteristics of Activists

- Family history
- Higher social economic status
- Demographic traits linked to party
- More opinionated
- Slightly more extreme in opinions
 - Table source: John G. Green, John S. Jackson and Nancy L. Clayton, "Issue Networks and Party Elites in 1996," in *The State of the Parties*, 3rd edition, ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).



New Party Activism

- Parties as networks of issue-oriented activists
- Reasons
 - Rise of cultural issues
 - Higher levels of education
 - Decline in patronage
 - Changes in party rules

New Party Activism

- Interest group involvement with parties
 - Recruitment of interest group members to be delegates
 - Recruitment of interest group members to be active in local party

New Party Activism

- Consequences
 - Increasing ideological polarization of parties
 - Ideologues less willing to compromise
 - Tension between activists and voters
 - Parties and candidates seen as too close to interest groups

Summary

- Activists small group of Americans
- Involved with parties for variety of reasons
- Dissimilar from other Americans
 - Background
 - Opinions
- New party activism centered on issues