

Washington State Parties

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Introduction:

In a previous chapter, we identified political parties in Washington State as being historically and comparatively weak at the organizational level (Appleton and Depoorter, 1996). Party organizational development had been restrained by two institutions that had come to symbolize the uniqueness of the state at some level; the ‘blanket primary’ and the absence of party registration. Coupled with a weak set of laws regulating party finance and campaign sending, the party system in Washington state remained perhaps less developed at an organizational level than many others.

However, in the intervening period, two broad sets of changes have taken place in the environment surrounding the party organizations themselves that have catalyzed party development. First, Washington state has become a truly competitive state where the control of the state legislature, prominent statewide offices, and the composition of the federal congressional delegation has become an intense field of struggle for the major parties. Second, there have been challenges and changes to the legal regime within which the parties operate, notable in the areas of campaign finance and the primary system.

Scholars have noticed the reinforcing effect that modified rules governing campaign finance have had on state parties. The growing salience of the ‘soft’ versus ‘hard’ money distinction under federal (and many state) rules actually served to recenter state party organizations in the election campaign process, and to cement their key position in the service-vendor model of the new political party. Exempt from many of

the restrictions placed on national party organizations and political action committees, state party organizations became an important node of money collection and distribution.

In this chapter, we will examine the impact of changing rules and environments on political parties in Washington state. At the same time, we argue that recent events in the state allow us to use the case of its political parties to test two broad theories of party behavior that have been proffered in recent years, the theory of parties as adaptive organizations and the theory of the cartel party. Before turning to these two models, however, we will provide a general overview of the development of the party system in Washington State, updating our previous observation about its contemporary party organizations.

The Legal Framework:

The Constitution. The constitution of the state of Washington neither mentions the right to party formation, nor guarantees the political party a central place in the political process. Article 1, Section 1 vests all political power in the people; Section Four mandates that “The right of ... the people peaceably to assemble for the common good shall never be abridged”, which obviously acknowledges the possibility of political parties. Where parties are directly mentioned under the constitution, it is mostly to provide that in the case of vacancies in partisan elected offices, appointments should be made by the district committees of the same party as the vacating legislator or, failing that, by the Governor from members of the same party.

Article 2, Section 43 prohibits elected officials of state parties from participating in the legislative redistricting process, and extends the same prohibition to those who have held state political party office within the previous two years. However, the

same section also prohibits discrimination against political parties in the redistricting process, perhaps once again acknowledging if the not the constitutional centrality of political parties their inevitability in the politics of the state.

The Regulation of Parties: However, if the constitution of the state does not make much reference to political parties, the same is not true of its laws. Over time, dating back to the earliest years of statehood, a web of legal requirements and restrictions have been placed upon political parties and their operations. Three broad areas of party activity have historically been the subject of legal regulation; party organization, and nominations, finance, and we will look at each of them in turn.

The organization of political parties in the state of Washington is subject to a number of broad legal requirements. RCW 29.42 accords a political party, “the right to make its own rules and regulations”; however, the same chapter of the regulatory code then proceeds to provide a legal definition of party status and lay out a mandatory organizational structure and mechanism for the internal distribution of power and leadership selection. While no quantitative judgment can be made of the extent of the regulation of parties in Washington in comparison to other states, recent studies indicate that they are among the most tightly circumscribed by state law in the country.

RCW 29.01.090 gives us a legal distinction between major and minor party status in Washington, a conceptual distinction which in its current form dates to 1977, although it was first conceived back in 1907. According to the chapter in question, “‘Major political party’ means a political party of which at least one nominee for president, vice president, United States senator, or a statewide office received at least five percent of the total vote cast at the last preceding state general election in an even-numbered year”. The

dichotomy between major and minor party status is most relevant to the procedures that are mandated for parties to nominate their candidates (more of which below). Some minor parties have criticized the existence of two separate legal regimes as tending to favor the interests of the major parties, although ballot access laws in Washington state have generally been regarded as among the more favorable to third parties in the nation (Seattle Times, May 14th, 1996).

At the time of writing, there are 11 political parties that are considered minor parties according to the Secretary of State. These range from organizations that have had some national prominence in recent years such as the Reform Party and the Green Party, to others that are less visible (i.e. the Constitution Party of Yakima, an offshoot of the Constitution Party of Washington). In the 2000 general election the Libertarian Party qualified for major party status, joining the Democratic and Republican parties as those bound by the provisions of the law relating to this type of party.

State law also lays out the formal structure of party organization, including the procedures by which they select party leaders; this intervention in intra-party organization dates back to 1921. Major political parties are built upon a three-tiered structure embedded in the legal framework; precincts, county committees, and the state central committee. Any qualified member of a major party may present themselves for election to the post of precinct committee officer, the election taking place during the general election in even-numbered years. RCW 29.42.050 includes a provision that the winning candidate must receive at least ten percent of the votes cast for candidate of the same party winning the most votes in the precinct, a provision that is intended to prevent “insurgencies” within the party structure. From the standpoint of party scholars, it is

significant that the law includes both recognition of and a role for party membership, even though this is not classically considered a concept that carries much meaning in the United States. Notwithstanding, the same law provides no definition of party membership, instead requiring precinct chairs to certify lists of party members to the county chair.

The second tier of the party structure in the state is that of the county committee, which is composed of the precinct officers. RCW 29.42.030 stipulates that incoming county committees must meet within a period of about two months following the general election in even-numbered years to elect a chair, vice chair, state committeeman and committeewoman. The chair and vice-chair must be of the opposite sex. The county chairs of major political parties in Washington have certain discretionary powers afforded to them; for example, they may choose to eliminate or add members to the lists provided by precinct officers when presenting the lists to the county auditor for certification. In the late 1960's, an amendment to these regulations mandated the appointment of legislative committees, elected by the precinct officers within state legislative districts of which a majority of precincts lie in counties of more than one million.

The state central committee is composed of the two delegates selected by each county committee; the central committees appoint the state chair and vice-chair, with a similar requirement that they be of the opposite sex. RCW 29.42.020 lays out the scope of the duties and activities of the state committees. While acknowledging the freedom that such organizations have to determine their political activities and participation in public life, the regulation specifically prohibits the state central committee from making rules and codes determining the procedural aspects of state party conventions. To summarize, the

legal framework in Washington state determines many aspects of party structure and the selection of party leadership, and necessitates that major parties compile certified membership lists.

Party Nominating Procedures:

One of the main areas of activity of any political party is the nomination and presentation of candidates for elected office. The history of political parties in Washington state, as in others, is tightly interwoven with state intervention in this arena; however, the unusual nature of its primary system, to be discussed below, had had a number of significant consequences for the major political parties bound by these provisions.

Until 1907, political parties were free to adopt whatever nominating procedures they saw fit in Washington. However, in that year the state adopted (as part of the wave of progressive era reforms sweeping the nation) a direct primary system that applied to newly-defined major political parties (those whose candidates had received at least ten percent of the vote for a statewide office in the previous election). Under this system, voters could opt which party primary they wished to participate in, but were constrained to vote only for candidates of one party. This reform did not include partisan voter registration, which did not even exist in all areas of the state until 1934.

In 1934, two powerful interests in the state – the Grange and organized labor groups – drafted an initiative to the legislature which gathered the required number of signatures and was presented on August 21st of that year. The key stipulation of the proposed legislation was that, “... voters may vote for their choice at any primary ... for any candidate for each office, regardless of political affiliation and without a declaration of

political faith or adherence on the part of the voter.” (RCW 29.18.200). What is now known as the ‘blanket primary’ was adopted by the legislature in February, 1935, and has governed the nomination of candidates in Washington ever since.

Under this unique system,¹ there can be no partisan voter registration. Subsequent revisions of the state code do permit major parties to hold voluntary primaries for presidential nominations (more of which below), but the state does not permit the official certification of such lists. For researchers, the consequence has been that the measurement of party identification in the state can only be done using survey-based (or reported) information; no observed data is available. More importantly, it has resulted in a sense that the political culture of the electorate in the Evergreen state is one of independence and split-ticket voting; in the words of the current Secretary of State, Sam Reed, “Our voters fiercely and rightly defend their freedom to choose any candidate on the ballot”.

The blanket primary was not to the liking of party elites, who wished to assert their right to organize, if not caucuses and conventions, at the very least closed, partisan primaries. Fearing the potential party-weakening effects, in 1936 they went to court to challenge the new system. In June 1936, the State Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality (Anderson vs. Millikin), and it did so again in 1978 (Heavey vs. Chapman). Neither the state Republican or Democratic parties have ever fully embraced the blanket primary and have on occasions mounted more or less vigorous attempts to institute partisan or closed primaries. In 1979, the State Senate went so far as to hold

¹ The only other state to have used the system was Alaska, which has since abandoned it in favor of a closed primary with voter registration. The so-called ‘Cajun primary’ in Louisiana shares the feature of unrestricted voter participation across primaries for different offices, although it has a second round run-off for the top two candidates if one of them does not receive an outright majority of votes cast.

hearings on an alternative primary system, but it did not result in any legislative proposal. An important supplement was added by an initiative to the legislature, I-99, submitted in 1988 and codified into law in 1989, that instituted presidential preference primary elections for determining the composition of delegations to national party conventions.

However, the blanket primary system ran into apparent trouble in the late 1990's. In 1996, Proposition 198 was approved by the voters in California which mandated that a blanket primary system be adopted. The major parties immediately appealed to the courts, and ultimately the US Supreme Court found it to be a constitutional violation of the rights of political parties to freely associate (*Jones vs. California*, 2000). In the wake of this 7-2 ruling, parties in both Washington and Alaska served notice that they intended to challenge the primary system in their own states. Although under much pressure from the governor, legislative leaders, and state officials not to act precipitously, the state Democratic party declared its intention to try to have the primary system changed before the general election in November 2000. At the time, however, even those urging restraint felt that the blanket primary system was doomed (*The Columbian*, July 15th 2000).

In the event, the primary system was used, many thought for the last time in that election after Secretary of State Munroe refused to withdraw it unless ordered to by the courts. Federal District judge Frank Burgess declined to do that and ruled that the legislature should adopt a new system before the end of the next session. When the new legislature convened, both the Democratic and Republican caucuses sent "their state party organizations strongly worded letters asking them to back off their insistence that future primaries be limited to self-identified members of the parties" (*Associated Press*, January 22nd 2001). Equally so, public opinion seemed to be firmly against change the system,

with some claiming that as many as 95% of respondents supporting the status quo (The Columbian, September 30th 2000). Notwithstanding, both state party chairs held firm in their view that the parties should have the right to organize their own closed primaries and that the state should implement a partisan registration system.

At least three bills were prepared in the course of the session, one of which would have gone so far as to introduce a radical change through the adoption of IRV (Instant Run-off Voting). Meanwhile, both the Democrat and Republican state committees prepared their own proposals for reform; in an interesting twist, the Libertarian party, newly qualified for major party status and thus bound by the same primary rules, announced that it too would seek to have the blanket primary eliminated. In a delicious irony, the Libertarians, who had previously argued that their exclusion from the blanket primary under the rules regulating minor parties had imposed heavier costs in terms of having to hold conventions and caucuses, now sought a return to a non-primary system.

Just as the deadline for resolving the lawsuit approached, the state House and Senate adopted two vastly different primary plans. The Senate plan opted for the so-called “Cajun primary” with its two-round non-partisan system. While this system retains the non-partisan registration features of the blanket primary, the majority opinion in *Jones vs. California* (2000) written by Justice Scalia seems to endorse the Louisiana primary as avoiding the constitutional pitfalls of the Washington version. In contrast, the House bill envisaged a mixed system, by which voters having registered with a party preference might vote solely for that party’s candidates, while independents would be able to vote for any candidate. Parties would have the option of declaring at least six months before the primary whether they intended to include independent votes in determining the

election outcome. This second version was much more palatable to the state parties themselves, who seem to have been motivated as much by the possibility of getting access to state-maintained records of party identifiers as anything else.

A compromise was rendered impossible when Governor Locke refused to accept either version, thus sending the matter back to the courts. Events took a strange turn in March 2002 when Judge Burgess unexpectedly and firmly rejected the lawsuit, declaring the blanket primary to be in conformity with the First Amendment. Interestingly, the judge cited the long history of the blanket primary in Washington as providing a compelling state interest based upon the manifest wishes of the voters. In his ruling the judge opined that, “The political parties’ evidence that there is a burden on their constitutional right of association is, for the most part, incompetent and inadmissible, and, at best, it is insubstantial and speculative” (Associated Press, March 28th 2002). The three major parties in the state immediately filed suit with the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and, at the time of writing, the suit is pending.

The controversy over the blanket primary only extends to major parties. Minor parties in the state have the possibility of organizing either caucuses or conventions to nominate their candidates. State law requires them to gather a number of signatures of registered voters (200 for statewide and presidential offices, 25 for others), and stipulates that any nominating convention must be attended by at least 25 registered voters from the jurisdiction in question. Nominated candidates must the garner at least 1% of votes cast in the primary election in order to qualify for the general election ballot (although they are exempt from this requirement in the nomination of presidential candidates). However, these relatively light obligations are considered to leave Washington as having

of the most open ballot access conditions in the country (Seattle Times, May 14th 1996). In addition, recent administrative rulings by state election officials have also allowed new parties to side-step the more onerous convention and nominating procedures if they wish to place a stand-in candidate on the ballot early in the election cycle (prior to formally designating their official candidate), and legislation signed by Governor Locke in April 2001 pushes back the deadline for presidential nominations to just 70 days before the general election (Ballot Access News 17:2, May 2001).

Campaign Finance:

Springing from an organization identifying itself as the Coalition for Open Government (COG) the state's Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) was created directly by a vote of the people in the 1972 election in the form of Initiative 276. While the proposed legislation and its reform minded supporters had been symbolically defeated in the state's legislature, they won a resounding victory carrying 72 percent of the vote. The commission was created to gather and place in the public domain information on the financing of political campaigns and to ensure that spending restrictions were abided. As an agency with a 1.9 million dollar budget, the PDC is charged with collecting, analyzing, and reporting contribution and spending reports provided by all state candidates, elected officials, political parties, political committees, lobbyists and lobbyist employers.

The statute that created the five-member, bi-partisan citizen commission covers five areas related to the financing of political activity in the state. The first is personal financial affairs. Anyone holding or seeking a state elected office, or holding a high level state appointed position is required to file a statement of their personal finances,

including sources of income and gifts, real estate holdings, investments, creditors, businesses owned and the major customers of those businesses. The second area of agency purview is campaign finance. Candidates and political groups raising and spending more than \$3,500 must file frequent reports indicating the names, addresses, occupations and employers of their contributors, the total amount each has donated and how those funds were spent. The PDC is also oversees the regulations governing political advertising and ensures that individuals and groups paying for political ads clearly identify themselves as the sponsor. The fourth area of the PDC's oversight extends to collecting the financial reports of traditional lobbying activity. The agency analyzes and makes public detailed monthly reports of the compensation of lobbyists and their employers, the identities of those entertained, gifts and amounts contributed to campaigns. The intended "sunshine" mission of the commission is exercised in their creation of public records – their final and purposeful area of action. The commission provides the bulk of the information contained the collected reports to the public on its website. In fact, for some, Washington's on-line disclosure requirements have become a model for similar efforts around the country (Hoover Institution 2002).

The PDC's most difficult task has been to ensure compliance with disclosure provisions, contribution limits, campaign practices and other campaign finance laws. Since the PDC was created the agency has been chronically underfunded and understaffed. It was only with the passage of voter Initiative 134 in 1992 that the agency received a much needed budget increase. However, initiative 134 also gave the agency more oversight responsibilities with regard to campaign finance. The initiative set fixed contribution limits for the agency to monitor and enforce.

This perhaps unintentional state of affairs has resulted in an agency, charged with ensuring compliance of campaign finance and disclosure rules, overwhelmed by candidate and group reports. Doug Ellis, the PDC's spokesman, responding to approximately \$11 million dollars worth of state party omissions uncovered by three watchdog groups, stated, "We don't have the staff to monitor one political committee and every one of their filings" (The News Tribune, Aug. 23rd 2002). When the PDC does uncover violations of the statutes governing state campaign finance or disclosure, the commission is responsible for imposing any penalties on the group, elected official, or candidate. And, as happened in the fall of 2002, the Washington Republican party simply refused to forfeit the 6.6 million dollars in contributions it did not report. Cases that cannot be settled within the hearings of the PDC are sent to the state's Attorney General with recommendations on the penalties to be assessed. In this instance, the PDC had to be satisfied with an admission of wrong doing on the part of the state party, but no fine was paid.

Party Trends:

Historically, Washington cannot be considered to be a dominant-party state, although there have been periods when one of the major parties has known a significant advantage in electoral terms (Appleton and DePoorter 1996; Nice 1992; Mullen and Pierce 1985). In recent years, the picture has been one of near parity and a high degree of competitiveness; although recent reports have suggested sentiments such as the Republicans being weary of minority party status (The Columbian, January 13th 2002), the most recent general election confirmed the competitiveness of the state. While the

Democrats currently have the edge in state-wide offices, the Republicans now hold one of the legislative houses and it is unlikely that this pattern will change in the near future.

Evidence from the mid-1990's shows that the GOP can be successful in the state where it displays a more moderate image; however, the party suffered when it appeared to voters that it was becoming hijacked by more right-wing activists associated with the New Christian Right (Appleton and Buckley 1998). The election of Chris Vance to the post of state chair undoubtedly signals a more moderate stance within the party organization itself. The success of John McCain in the 2000 presidential primary was an additional indicator of how the state GOP has become relatively moderate and independently minded after the turmoil of the 1990's.

However, in an interesting paradox, competitiveness as measured by outcomes has been accompanied by a decline in the number of contested races at the state legislative level. In the 2002 elections, 28 state house races were uncontested by the filing deadline, with a few more having just one major party contender. In 10 of the Senate races (over one third of those up for renewal), incumbents faced no contest in 8 of them and only a minor party challenge in two others. By comparison, only 8 House seats and four Senate races were uncontested in 2000. Press reports cite state election officials and campaign strategists as suggesting that the state parties had decided to concentrate their resources on a number of selected competitive "swing seats" (The Columbian, July 30th 2002).

Furthermore, the number of districts in which incumbents face active challengers in primary elections also has waned; whereas 18% of incumbent members of the state senate and 11 % of the members of the state house faced primary challenges in the period 1990-92, the these numbers had fallen to 11% and 9% correspondingly for 1994-

2000 (New 2002, 5). There has also been a slight decline in the numbers of incumbents defeated, comparing the same two periods. Thus the increasing competitiveness of the election outcomes masks a drift towards less competitiveness in different areas of the state. Some studies have suggested that this is a consequence of campaign finance restrictions that force parties to choose where to spend their money (New 2002), although an examination of money raising and spending by the state parties does not seem to indicate penury on their part.

Earlier studies have shown that Washington's state party organizations, while operating in what has historically been a relatively restrictive and anti-party environment, have in recent years become more professionalized and more centralized (Appleton and DePoorter 1996; Nice 1992). Studies suggested that during the 1970's, state and county party organizations became stronger than the national average (Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, Huckshorn 1989), and recent evidence shows nothing to hint that this may have changed. While party strengthening at the state level is one clear consequence of the federal campaign finance regime, in Washington state it has been facilitated even more by the state campaign finance laws discussed above; furthermore, where there have been attempts to apply the provisions of those laws in a restrictive manner vis à vis political parties, the parties have routinely prevailed in the courts.

Recently released campaign finance information demonstrates the central position that state party committees have come to play in the financing of political campaigns in the state. Despite existence of a web of regulation of political money at both state and federal levels, there is a large discrepancy between figures provided by public bodies and monitoring groups. Washington state is considered to have some of the toughest

campaign finance restrictions and reporting requirements (the Center for Public Integrity ranked it 2nd in the nation in 2000), but the lack of enforcement has led to severe doubts about the effectiveness of this regime (Center for Public Integrity 2002). Indeed, one report suggested that the bulk of money spent in state races is now simply unreported (Seattle Times, November 4th 1996). According to the state PDC, the money spent by state party committees declined through the 1990’s (Washington State Public Disclosure Commission 2001). But the election of 2000 saw a marked reversal, with contributions and expenditures more than doubling over a four year period since 1996; the state Democrats raised \$10.3 million, while the Republicans had a slight edge with \$12.7 million – 4 out of every 5 dollars was in the form of unregulated soft money for the Democrats, and the Republican party reported 1 in 10 of dollars raised as being regulated (hard money) contributions. The Washington Council for Fair Elections has cast doubt on whether the official state spending data captures all of the money spent; the Executive Director, Teresa Purcell was quoted in the Political Finance and Lobby Reporter (1997) as suggesting that “Since Initiative 134 was passed... there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of money spent and much less disclosure”.

The Center for Public Integrity estimates that the Republican and Democratic state parties spent a combined total of over \$27 million in the 2000 election cycle (see Table 1).

Table 1: Expenditures in the 2000 cycle for Washington State

Expenditure Type	Democrats Total	Republicans Total	Grand Total	Number of Expenditures
Overall Expenditures	\$12,807,654	\$14,280,716	\$27,088,370	2938
By Party	\$11,038,260	\$13,152,739	\$24,190,999	860
By Caucus	\$1,769,394	\$1,127,977	\$2,897,370	2078

Source: The Center for Public Integrity.

Table 2 below shows how state party and caucus committees spent that money during the 2000 election cycle. Transfers in this table include money moved by a committee to its own federal account or to another party or caucus committee at the state, local or national level.

Table 2: Detailed Expenditures in the 2000 cycle for Washington State

Broad Category	Democrats Total	Republicans Total	Grand Total
ADMINISTRATIVE	\$801,593	\$252,658	\$1,054,250
CANDIDATE SUPPORT	\$1,980,025	\$2,316,435	\$4,296,460
FUNDRAISING	\$135,370	\$193,244	\$328,614
MEDIA	\$96,633	\$65,065	\$161,698
POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,295,046	\$2,109,158	\$3,404,205
TRANSFERS	\$9,058,778	\$9,741,559	\$18,800,337
UNDETERMINED	\$4,609	\$1,697	\$6,306

Source: The Center for Public Integrity.

According to these data, the state parties transferred approximately two thirds of their total money spent to their federal campaign accounts. At the same time, the national parties are estimated to have transferred \$12.5 million to the state parties in unregulated soft money contributions, the seventh highest among all 50 states (and more than New York).

The practice of money transfers between national and state party organizations, the consequence of the hard/soft money distinction, has created what some have termed “the dispersion of disclosure”. For example, the Washington State Republican Party failed to disclose donations it received from the RNC late in the 2000 election. Moreover, the national party committees (RNC, RNCC, NRSC, NRCC) did not report those donations until a year after the fact. The Public Disclosure Commission demanded the forfeiture of about \$6.5 million, \$4.8 million of it from the RNC. The RNC contested the decision, arguing that it had complied with the intent if not the letter of the law, and

the PDC agreed to a retroactive rule change that would exonerate both the party and their candidates (Associated Press, September 27th 2002).

The state Democratic party was not immune from similar practices. The party central committee reported to the PDC that it had received \$705,040 in soft money transfers from the national committees in 2000. However, a comparison with FEC records showed that a much larger amount had been reported by the national committees, \$6.6 million. According to the Center for Public Integrity, “[I]t was the biggest discrepancy between the amount of soft money any state had reported receiving from their national headquarters and how much the national offices told the federal government they disbursed” (Center for Public Integrity 2002). The state party filed 24 late reports documenting \$2.8 million of the money in question, with \$3.8 million unaccounted for. The state party central committee officially blamed difficulties from new staffing and new technology for the failure to comply with state campaign finance law. As the CPI notes, “Whatever the cause, the Washington State Democratic Central Committee was able to avoid disclosure requirements that are among the most rigorous in the nation for nearly a year and a half” (Center for Public Integrity 2002). At the time of writing, the official complaint filed by the PDC is pending, although a similar outcome to the Republican party’s case is not unlikely.

These cases are relatively typical of what has been happening in the national context; the Center for Public Integrity, the National Institute for Money in State Politics, and the Center for Responsive Politics conducted a study that estimated that state parties left \$16 million in soft money transfers unreported in 2000. A combination of federal and state loopholes, combined with the ability of party organizations to raise and spend

unregulated soft money, has created a web of complex transactions that make exact documentation of spending patterns almost impossible. Although the PDC has had some limited successes in stemming the avalanche of such practices (e.g. Governor Locke, the state Democratic party, and candidate organizations were forced to relinquish about \$37,000 in contributions from two labor unions that had been given during the 2000 election) it has simply been overwhelmed by the extent of the practices in recent years. Most observers agree that the restrictions on spending imposed by I-134 have been either circumvented or outright subverted by state parties and campaign professionals flush with soft money.

The influx of soft money brought with it the possibility of party growth and professionalization. The state Democratic party invested in new staff and new technology; Table 2 shows that their reported administrative costs in the 2000 election cycle were almost four times higher than that of the Republicans. A rough gauge of how the state parties have become more central in the campaign finance is the amount of money flowing from the central committees in relation to other party committees. Table 3 shows the relative spending by the Democratic central committee and two key campaign committees in two presidential elections years.

Table 3: Relative campaign spending by Democratic central committee, 1992 and 2000

Committee	Total \$ disbursed (1992)	Number of Contributions	Total \$ Disbursed (2000)	Number of Contributions
Central Committee	79,336	37	1,819,134	403
House Caucus Committee	134,139	45	640,341	219
Senate Caucus Committee	210,841	24	269,267	114

There has been a clear shift to the state central committee as the money pump for campaign financing; a similar trend is noticeable for the state Republican central committee which made \$1,266,327 in 149 contributions in the same year. In fact, the state Republican party ended the 2000 election cycle with cash unspent; a fact that led to intra-party squabbling when the state chair, Don Benton, attempted to move the party into a new headquarters.

With federal campaign finance reform on the horizon in 2000, national parties and affiliated committees redistributed soft money donations among state parties. The McCain-Feingold reform law, which went into effect after the 2002 elections, has now banned unregulated and unlimited contributions to the national parties. It is too early to determine what the effects of the new campaign finance regime will be on; however, the impact of McCain-Feingold at the state level will be a further strengthening of state parties. It is clear that during the era of campaign finance regulations since the mid-1970s, state political parties have become an indispensable node in the financing of political campaigns and the Evergreen state is an exemplar.

Conclusion:

Over the years, political parties have continued to be a major organizational presence in the state, despite the existence of (a) a political culture distrustful of the partisan division of political life, and (b) a developed state regulatory framework that has prescribed organizational processes and circumscribed elections and campaigning. Even though the state has attempted to implement some of the toughest and most open campaign finance rules, the influx of soft money from the federal level and the increasing

stakes in a period of intense party competitiveness have meant an expanded role for the key organizational elements of the party.

The case of parties in Washington state shows that party organizations have become highly adaptive. Whether in the arena of nominations, campaigns, or fundraising, the state parties have become (a) more autonomous from their both the electorate and state institutions, and (b) central in the election process. The trends noted by Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, and Huckshorn (1989) appear to have continued, and the state party organization has emerged as a professional and potent player. Party strengthening in the anti-party environment of Washington is indeed a noteworthy phenomenon.

More recently, scholars of political parties have identified the ‘cartel party’ as part of the evolutionary cycle of political parties in democratic societies; that is, major parties which, in the face of dealignment and/or new competitors, strategically collude to restrict the threats and retain their collective dominance (Katz and Mair, 1994). It would be a stretch to suggest the state parties in Washington are highly collusive, yet the experience with both the blanket primary and the circumvention of recently-implemented state campaign finance laws shows that they are not immune to acting in concert to further their strategic interests. The legal distinction between major and minor parties, with the accompanying differences in legislated nominating and operating procedures, is a critical fault line in the organization of party political life in the state. The major party organizations have acquired the capacity and the professionalism to make themselves indispensable in the election process and, by extension, in linking citizens to the institutions of the state.

To find:

The Columbian, July 15th 2000

(Associated Press, March 28th 2002).

(Hoover Institution 2002).

(The News Tribune, Aug. 23rd 2002).

(The Columbian, January 13th 2002)

(The Columbian, July 30th 2002).

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