

Politics, Government, & Civility: Wisconsin and the Nation

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Purpose of the Course

- Recent events in Wisconsin and the nation, including the 2016 presidential election and battle over Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to S. Ct., prompt concern over intense partisan polarization and incivility in politics.
- Purpose of this course is to examine the problem and its causes, and to offer some solutions.
- Key events: 2010 elections in Wisconsin and nation, Tea Party success, WI recall elections in 2011 and many political and policy controversies since then, esp. election of Donald Trump.
- At the national level, increasing hyper-partisanship, incivility, hatred, and vitriol within both parties. Will it go away soon? Not likely.
- Polls say most people think it has become worse since 2016 elections, and it was evident in the 2018 midterm elections.

Example from Late 2018: Hillary Clinton Versus Heidi Heitkamp on Political Civility

- *New York Times*: “Hillary Clinton says Democrats cannot be civil with Republicans who want “to destroy what you stand for, what you care about.” And, she added in her [interview](#) with CNN, civility in the United States will begin only when the Democratic Party wins back control of Congress.”
- “But at least one member of her own party disagrees.”
- “‘That’s ridiculous,’ former Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, a red-state Democrat who has billed herself as a moderate, [told](#) CNN. ‘I can’t imagine how you get anything done if you don’t bring civility back into politics, and that goes for both sides.’”

Purpose of Course II

- A topic that suits these contentious political times.
- A **low point in public confidence** in government and a high point in **party and ideological polarization**. Plus, **anger** at those with conflicting political views.
- Nation faces many challenges, domestically and internationally. Solutions require cooperation between parties and bipartisan action.
- So we should ask about the **causes of incivility** and **solutions**. Essential to make progress.
- Please ask questions throughout as well as at end. Otherwise we have a two-hour lecture!

The Incivility Problem in Brief

- **Nicolas Kristof** 2018: “It should be possible both to believe deeply in the rightness of one’s own cause and to hear out the other side. Civility is not a sign of weakness, but of civilization.”
- Yet recent trends mean **high levels of distrust, anger, political hatred, and ridicule on both sides**. Rising distrust of mainstream **media, science, economics, and expertise**.
- All this means there is less common ground for political discussions across party lines and thus cooperative solutions.

Incivility Not New: Historical Advice

- **Edmund Burke**, quoted by E. J. Dionne: “rage and frenzy will pull down more in half an hour than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in a hundred years.”
- **George Washington** on political demagoguery: “It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection.”
- **Obama** farewell address January 2017: American democracy is weakened “when we allow our political dialogue to become **so corrosive** that people of good character are turned off from public service, so **coarse with rancor** that Americans with whom we disagree are not just misguided, but somehow malevolent.”
- So, what do we need? To restore civility and common sense, and a constructive political dialogue. But how to do that?

How We Will Proceed

- Will (1) **frame the problem** of party and ideological polarization and incivility, (2) review its many **causes**, and then look to (3) **possible solutions**.
- Will offer examples of the problem, both in Wisconsin and the nation.
- I hope to be fair to both sides and both political parties. Polls show equal unhappiness with current political conditions and inability to act on problems.
- Vast majority of Americans want policymakers to solve real problems, not foster political gridlock by arguing constantly with one another.

The 2010 WI Elections and Aftermath

- In Wisconsin, the **elections of 2010** and the conflict over Gov. Scott Walker, the state legislature's actions on the **budget repair bill**, and the subsequent **recall elections**.
- Early 2011: **Act 10**: public employees and budget. Weaken unions that support Democrats.
- **Large public protests** in Madison around Capitol.
- Republicans strongly supported the Governor.
- State was and continues to be **deeply divided politically**, as are families, and neighbors.
- More controversy followed over budget actions on education, voter ID law and other election laws, mining law, school vouchers.

Some Effect of Polarization in WI

- A newly emerging highly **partisan policymaking process**. Bills introduced quietly, brief or no hearings, few studies or commissions (the previous way of lawmaking), little public debate, little media coverage.
- Examples: right-to-work law, civil service reform, Wisconsin Idea for UW and merger of two-year and four-year campuses, changes for WI open records law.
- Early December 2018: special legislative session to limit Gov. Evers' power and enhance power of Republican legislature. Partisan bill passed within days amid national news coverage and public protests. Similar measures approved in Michigan.

Effects in WI and the Nation

- Nearly all of the state measures voted on today with **party-line vote**. Reps and Dems on opposite sides.
- Similar with Democrats. Obamacare in 2010 and Recovery Act in 2009. No Republicans in House or Senate voted for Obamacare and few for Recovery Act. Democrats, however, did hold extensive hearings, voted on many amendments, and took time to finalize Affordable Care Act.
- What's wrong with this kind of decision making no matter which party does it?
- Little or no serious **analysis of consequences, costs, or alternatives**. Little debate. Therefore risk of policy failure and more partisan rancor. Harder to resolve in the future. More public anger at government.

Patterns of Policymaking III

- Government shutdown in 2013 over Affordable Care Act. Similar actions threatened over Planned Parenthood, Iran deal, tax reform, immigration policy, climate change.
- Partial **shutdown in late 2018 and early 2019**. Longest ever. Over funding for a border wall that few legislators (or the public) want.
- All leads to very low **public regard** for Congress and politicians. Evident in all national polls.
- Who is to blame? Republicans? Democrats? Obama? Trump? All of them? Public blames everyone. See next slide.
- Intense partisan disagreements on many issues.

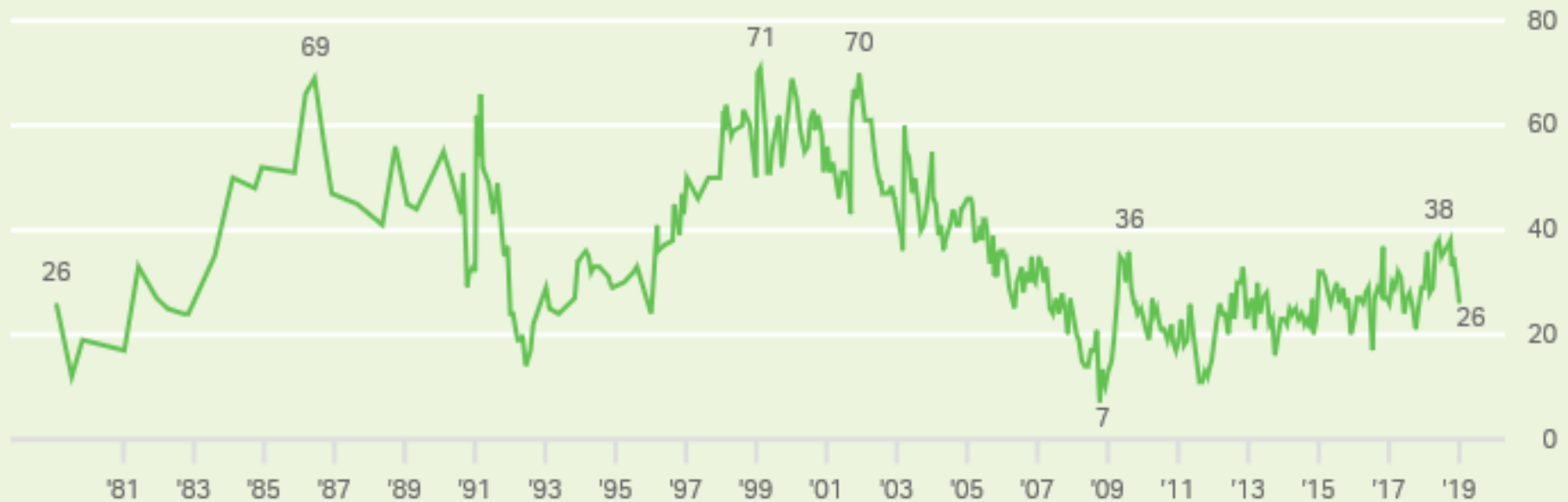
The Effects on Views of Gov't. and Politics

- Polls show Congress/politicians highly unpopular, and both Dems and Reps criticized. January 2019: **20% approval, 75% disapproval**. Other polls sometimes lower: Economist/YouGov of July 2018: congressional job approval at 10%.
- Widespread sense that Congress is **dysfunctional**
- Seen in repeated legislative **gridlock** and bitter partisan disputes. Ex. Kavanaugh hearings and approval.
- Will more people simply not vote in disgust?
- If public rejects politics, special interests win.
- Selected surveys demonstrate the patterns.

Satisfaction with U.S. Direction: Gallup Poll in January 2019: 72% Dissatisfied, 26% Satisfied. Down from 2018

Satisfaction With the Way Things Are Going in the U.S.

■ % Satisfied



GALLUP

Polarization: How New Is It?

- Congressional scholars: The most divisive partisan divide in over 100 years! Measured as party differences on floor votes in the House of Representatives.
- Most scholars say that polarization is at exceptionally high level, but not equally attributable to both parties.
- They say Republicans in Congress (House, esp.) moved rightward, not so much Dems to left.
- Of course, there are many Dems who have moved left or already there.

How New Polarization Is Continued

- Also can see leftward movement among Dems in the 2016 presidential election, and 2020 run, esp. with **Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Keith Ellison**.
- And since the election with Democratic opposition to President Trump. Esp. true with younger voters. And recent success for **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** in NY.
- Also, fewer “Blue Dog” or moderate Democrats in the House now. So Dems more united than before.
- Scholars’ perspective: Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson in 2015: “there is mounting evidence that the increasing distance between the two parties is **primarily** a consequence of the Republican Party’s 35-year march to the right.”
- Do you agree? Disagree? Is this a fair conclusion?
- Scholars call this “**asymmetric polarization**.”

Political Scientists on Polarization

For those interested, lots of books in last few years on polarization and incivility, with more coming all the time:

Nathaniel Persily, ed., *Solutions to Political Polarization in America* (2015).

James Campbell, *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America* (2016).

Popular account: Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, *Its Even Worse than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (2012):

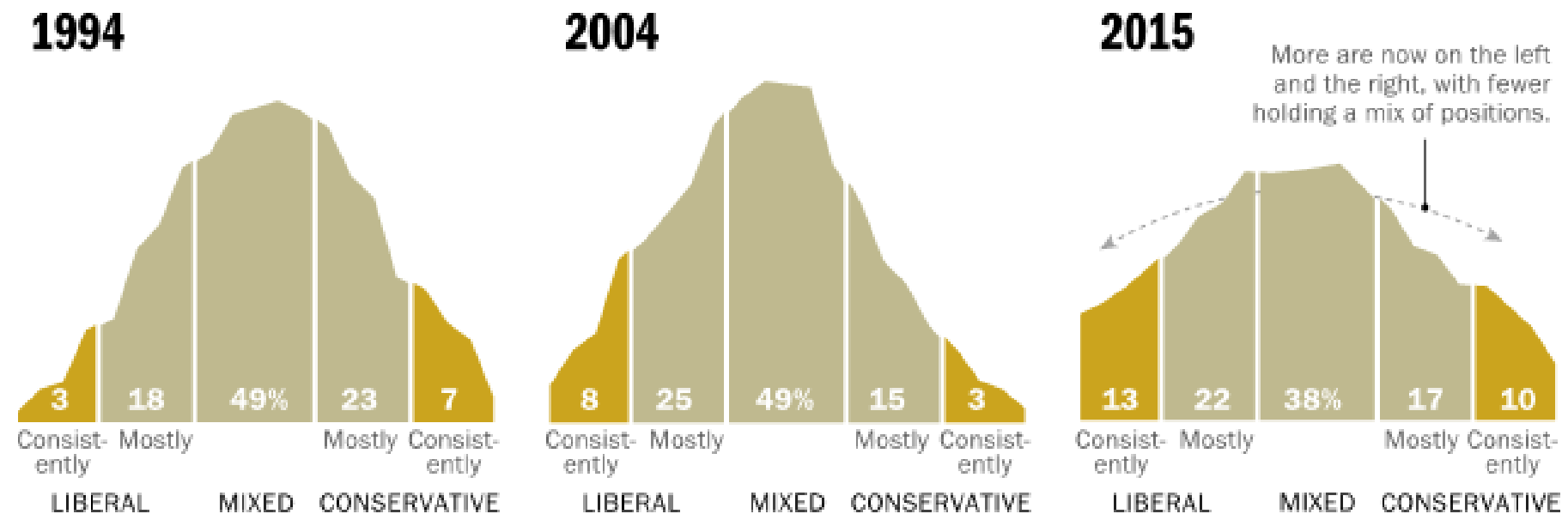
New book: E.J. Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann, *One Nation After Trump* (Sept. 2017).

Wisconsin: Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*.

Polarization Among the Public: Even Stronger among Those Highly Engaged

Growing minority holds consistent ideological views

On a 10-item scale of political values, % who are...



Source: Survey conducted Aug. 27-Oct. 4, 2015 (N=6,004). Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions.

Partisan Polarization History Continued

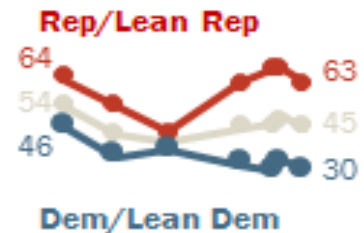
- Pew Research Center: growth in polarization seen under George W. Bush and Barack Obama. But it started largely after **1994 election** (Gingrich revolution) and rose again after 2002.
- Partisan gulf especially wide on social safety net, environment, labor unions, equal opportunity, scope of government, immigration. Pew has **graphics on all of this: www.people-press.org**.
- These differences were negligible in late 1980s in the George H.W. Bush administration. E.g., he recommended and signed Clean Air Act of 1990.

Polarization on Issues: Pew Oct. 2017

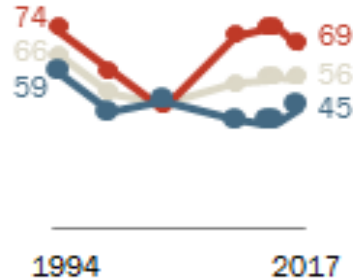
Growing gaps between Republicans and Democrats across domains

% who say ...

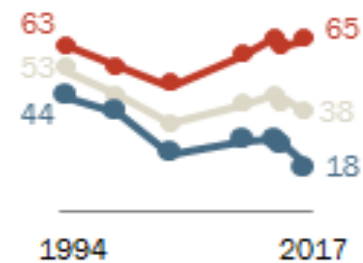
Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good



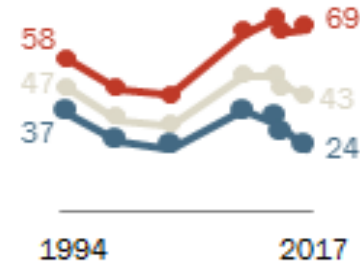
Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient



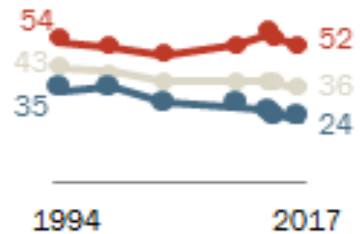
Poor people have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return



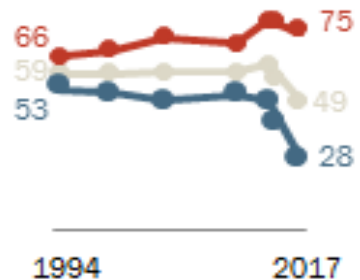
The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy



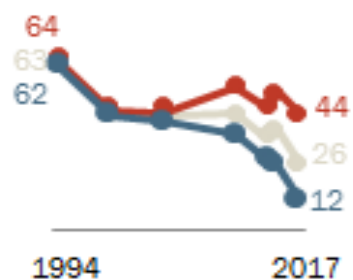
Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit



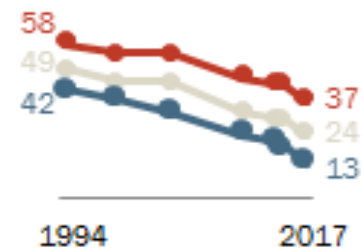
Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition



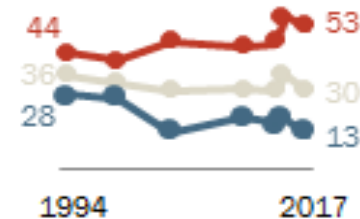
Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care



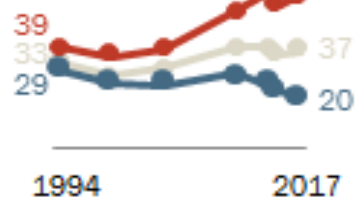
Homosexuality should be discouraged by society



The best way to ensure peace is through military strength



Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy



Source: Survey conducted June 8-18 and June 27-July 9, 2017.

Polarization Affects Perceptions of the President and Reality

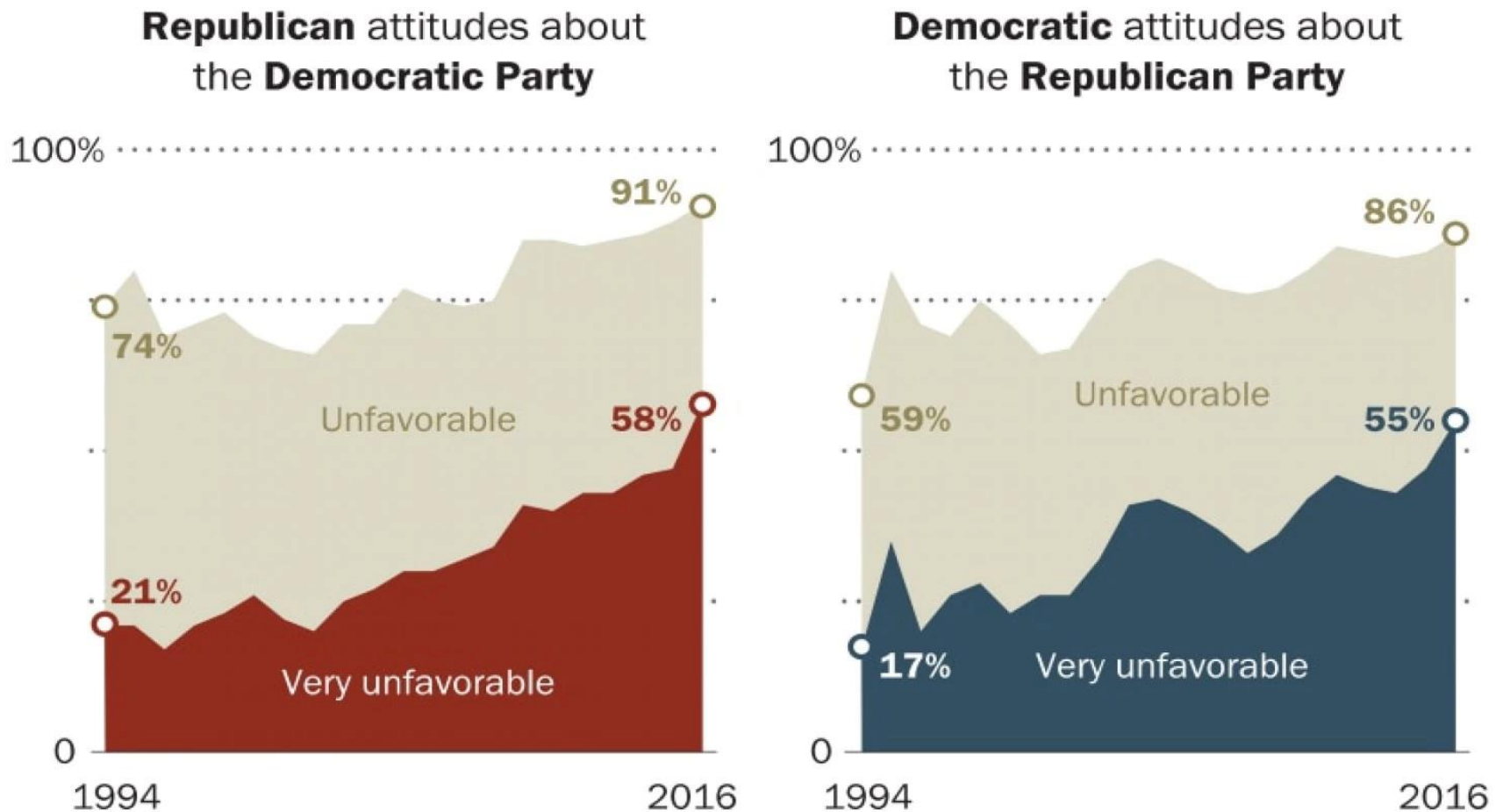
- Reps believed by a **64/27 spread** that under Obama unemployment increased and by a **57/27 spread** that the stock market went down.
- In 2018, however, two-thirds of Trump voters correctly said that the market rose in 2017 compared to 35 percent of Clinton voters. So the **bias works both ways!**
- Post-election polls: **49 to 52 percent of Republicans and Trump voters** thought that Trump won the popular vote. Clinton won by about 2.9 million votes or 2.1 percent.
- May 2018 poll: nearly half of Reps believed that millions voted illegally in 2016, as Trump said; no evidence exists showing this. Similar distortions on immigration issues.

Polarization as Tribal Politics

- Amanda Taub, “The Real Story About Fake News Is Partisanship,” *New York Times*, January 11, 2017
- “Today, political parties are no longer just the people who are supposed to govern the way you want. They are a **team** to support, and a **tribe** to feel a part of.”
The public’s view of politics: a **zero-sum game**: “It’s about helping their team win, and making sure the other team loses.”
- Psychologist Steven Pinker: Opinions “have become loyalty badges for one’s tribe.”
- **Charles Sykes**, 2017: “We do not simply disagree; we are at war. We do not merely differ with our opponents on matters of principle or policy; political paranoids believe that we are fighting a twilight struggle for civilization.”

Very Negative View of Other Party: A Sharp Rise Since 1994

Majorities have deeply negative views of other party

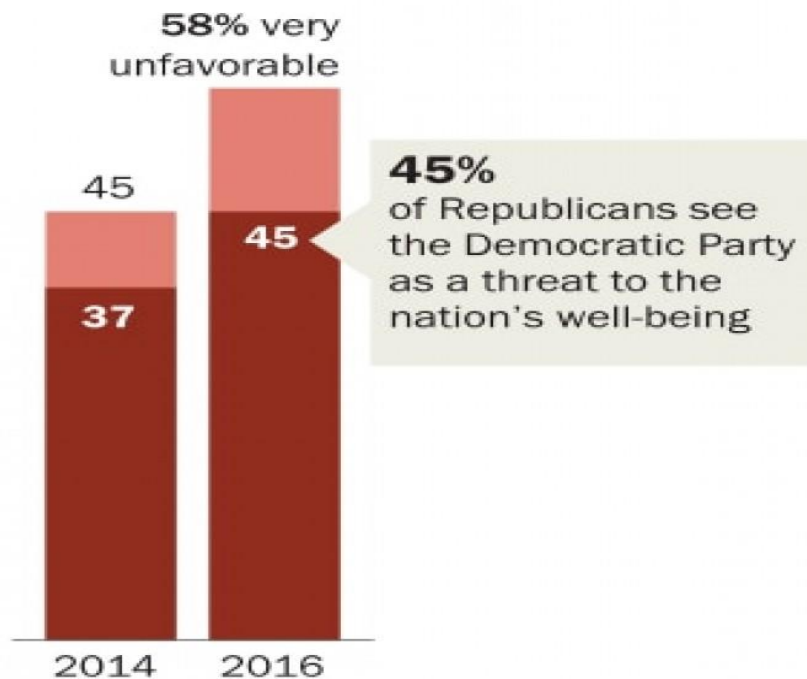


Source: Survey conducted April 12-19, 2016.

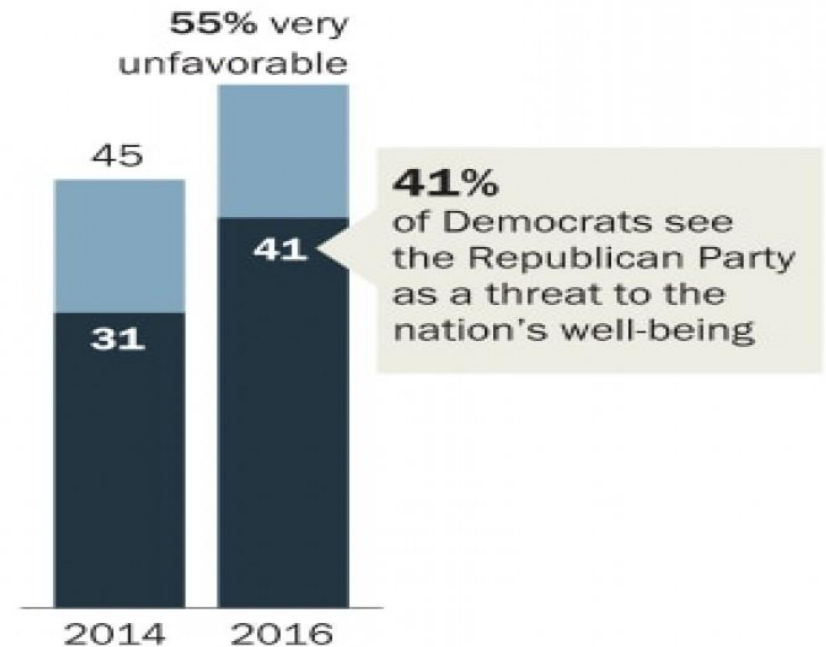
Parties View Opposition With Great Distrust: Perhaps a Wider Gap Today?

Many Republicans, Democrats view the other party as a 'threat to the nation's well-being'

Republican attitudes about
the **Democratic Party**



Democratic attitudes about
the **Republican Party**

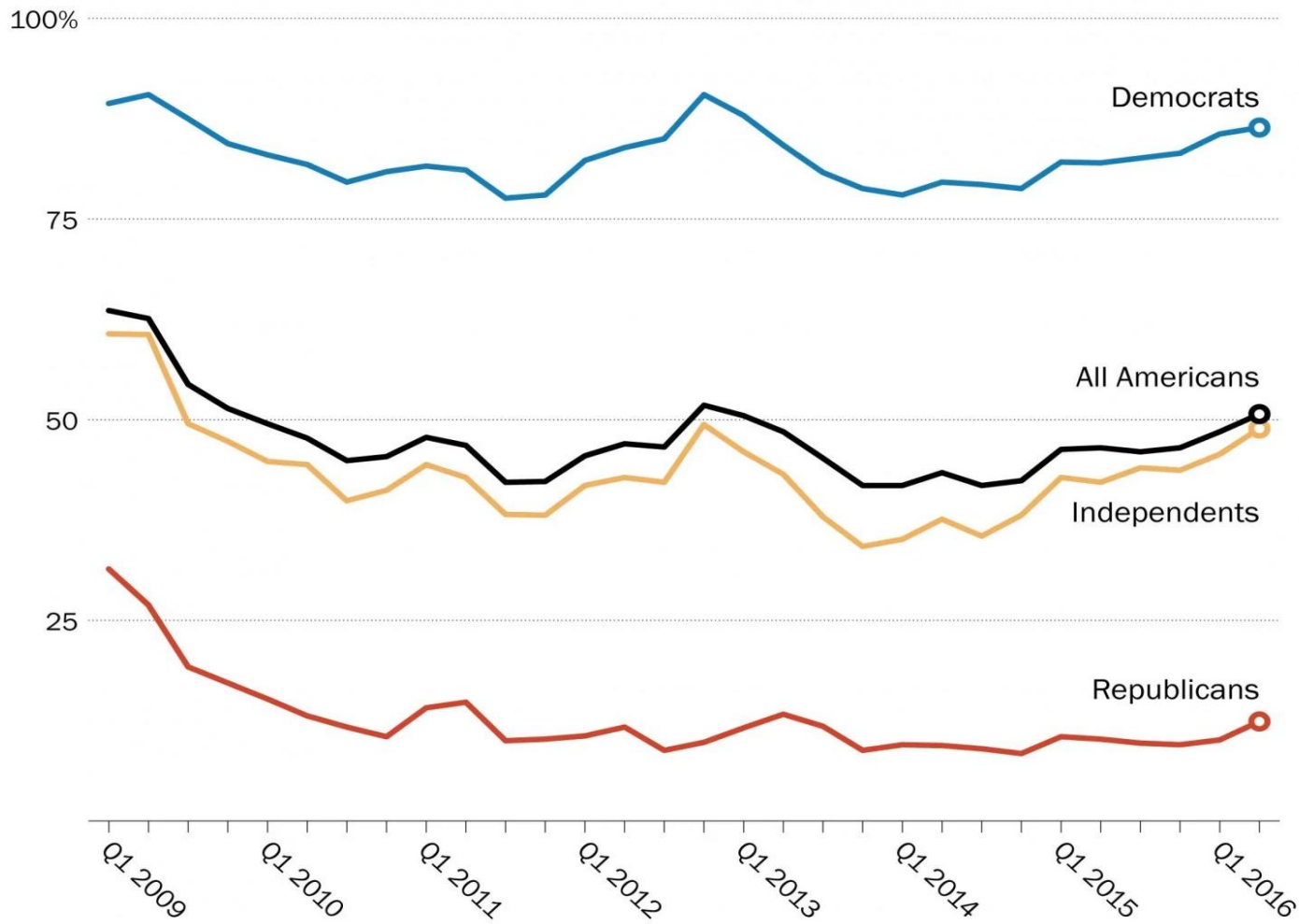


Source: Survey conducted April 12-19, 2016.

Obama Approval Ratings Show Partisan Divide Not New

Average quarterly approval of Barack Obama by party

Data from Gallup.



Trump Job Approval by Party: Largest Partisan Divide Ever in Gallup

Donald Trump Job Approval by Party Identification

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
	%	%	%
2019			
2019 Feb 1-10	89	38	5
2019 Jan 21-27	88	32	5
2019 Jan 2-10	88	31	6
2018			
2018 Dec 17-22	89	39	8
2018 Dec 10-16	86	37	7

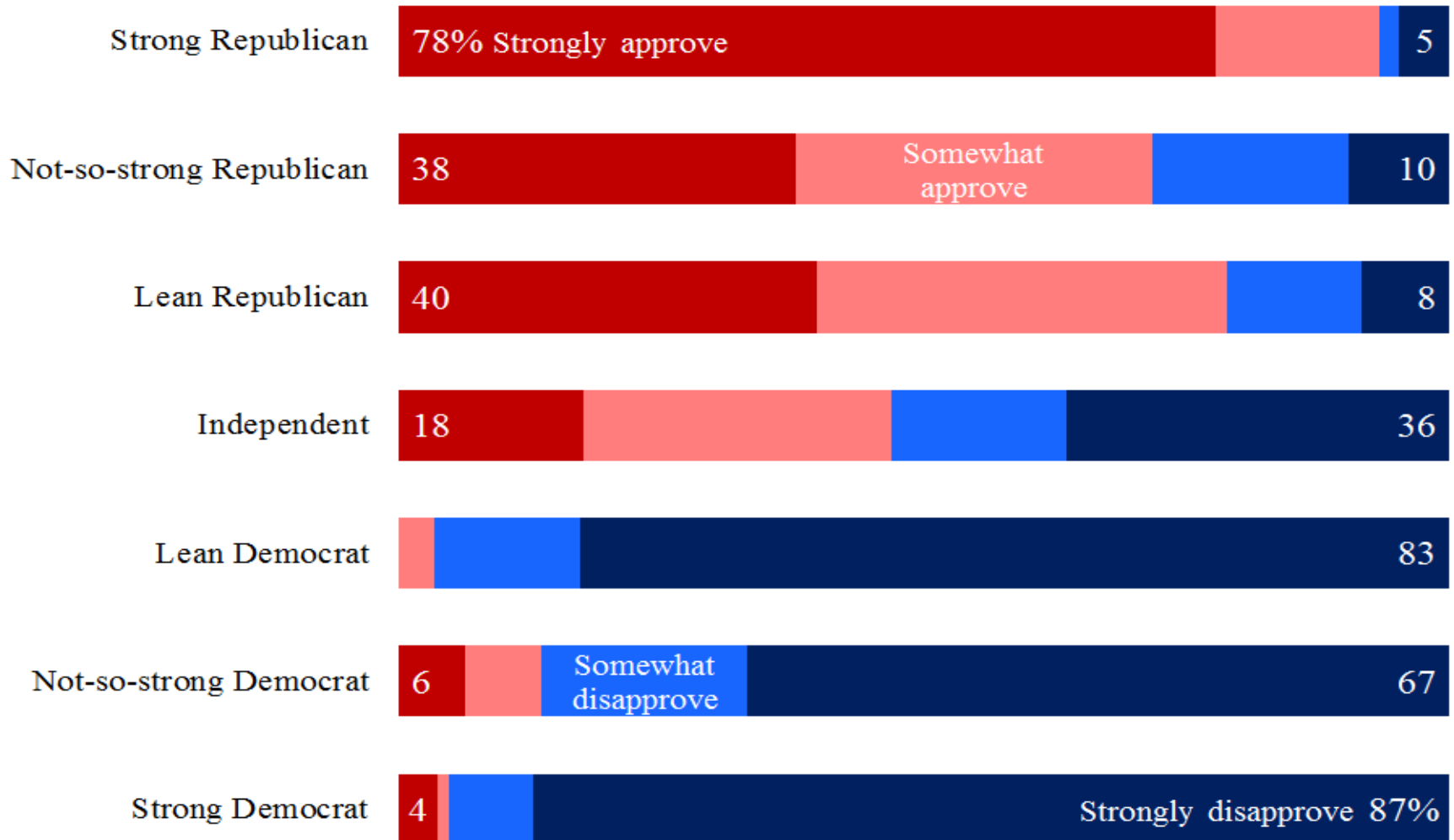
Quinnipiac Poll March 5, 2019

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?

	Tot	Rep	Dem	Ind	Men	Wom	WHITE..... COLLEGE DEG	
							Yes	No
Approve	38%	82%	6%	34%	48%	30%	38%	52%
Disapprove	55	12	93	57	45	65	58	41
DK/NA	6	6	1	8	7	5	4	6

	AGE IN YRS.....				WHITE.....			
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Men	Wom	Wht	Blk
Hsp								
Approve	22%	39%	44%	41%	55%	36%	45%	12%
20%								
Disapprove	68	55	52	56	40	58	50	84
70								
DK/NA	9	6	5	3	5	6	5	4
10								

Same on Trump Approval, but Academic Study August 2018



Not Just about Politics, But Also Public Policy

- **Pattern extends to nearly all policy dialogue**—health care, environmental protection, climate change and energy, immigration reform, gun control, abortion and contraceptive policies, same-sex marriage, public school reform and vouchers, IRS and tax reform, and more.
- This all means typically an absence of reasonable discussions about solving problems. Shared facts.
- Partisan bickering rather than problem solving. What some call **ideological politics**.
- Yet polls continue to show the public strongly wants cooperation and problem solving.

Example of Partisanship: Voter ID Laws

- **Voter ID Laws:** **supporters** say they are essential to combat voter fraud, in particular, **voter impersonation fraud**, and thus to restore integrity to elections.
- Partisan difference: Reps think/say fraud is common; Dems say it is not.
- Pres. Trump's "voter fraud" commission: Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity. Critics say its purposes was to further restrict the right to vote.
- Election experts find impersonation at the polls is virtually nonexistent; also that current election laws already severely punish wrongful voting.

Voter ID Laws Continued

- Many studies find that ID laws tend modestly to **reduce voter turnout** by seniors, minorities, poor, and students. Other studies contest these findings.
- So do voter ID laws suppress the Democratic vote? If so, is that the intention?
- Hard to study because states that enact voter ID laws also tend to restrict voting in other ways: limits on early voting, voting by mail, restricting number of polling places, registration deadlines, etc.
- 36 states, including WI, enacted such laws. **32** were in effect for **2014/2016 elections**.
- **Gallup in 2016: 80 percent of the public favor**, though a partisan difference. May be lower now.
- So is there a case for voter ID requirement? What do you think?

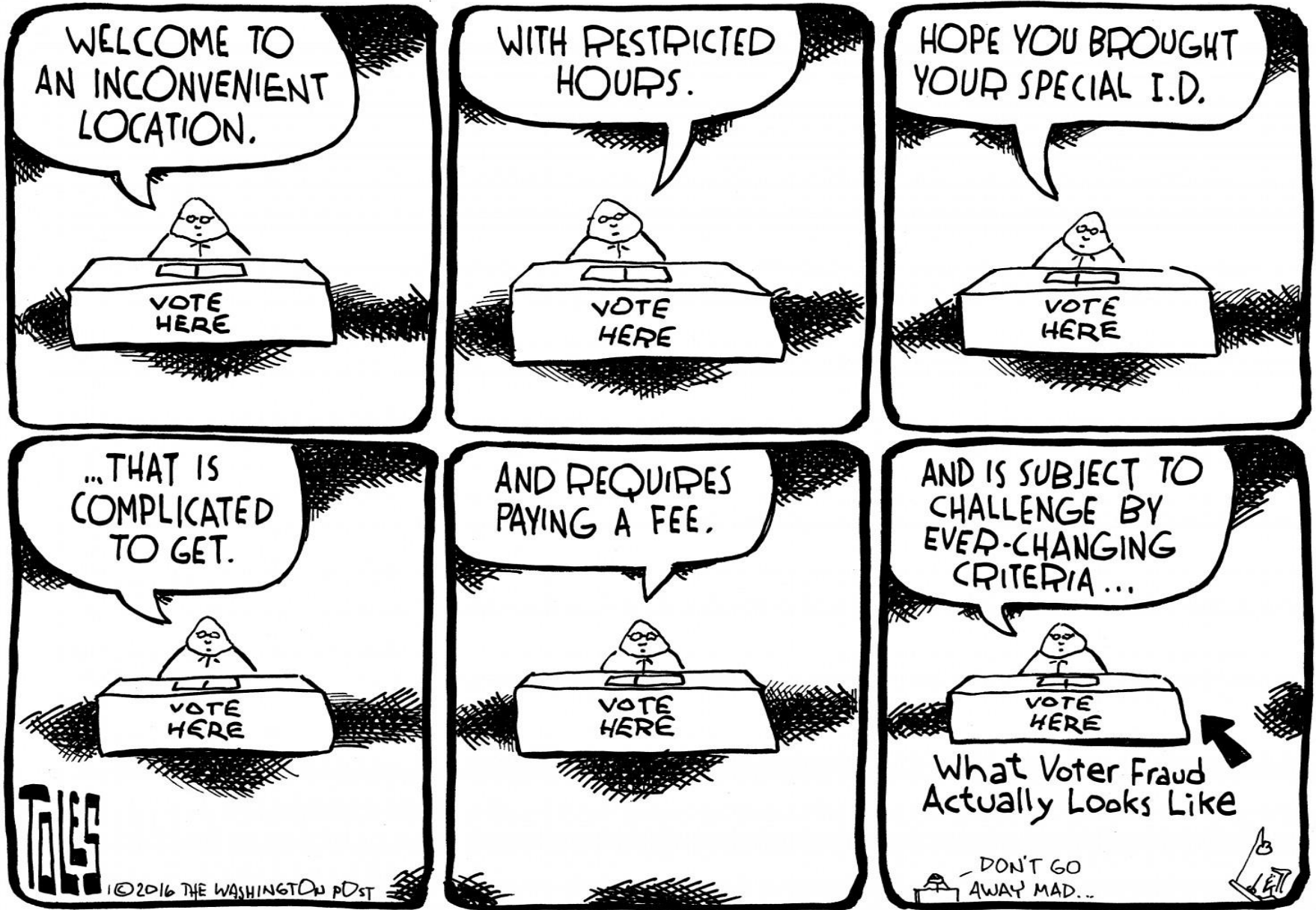
Voter ID Laws in Court

- Judge **Adelman's** decision in the Wisconsin case in April 2014. No voter impersonation exists in Wisconsin; thus, no justification for voter ID law.
- Said some 300,000 people in WI **might be** denied right to vote. Opinion widely cited across the nation.
- Similar decisions in **Texas** in 2014, 2015, and Aug. 2017. Judge Ramos: there is a “lack of evidence of in-person voter impersonation fraud.” The ID law, similar to Wisconsin’s, she said, “has no legitimacy.”

Voter ID Views

- 7th Circuit Court in Chicago reversed Adelman in Sept. U.S. S. Ct. put on hold decision to implement for November 2014.
- Judge Richard A. **Posner** on 7th Circuit: idea of voter fraud by impersonation is "a mere fig leaf for efforts to disenfranchise voters likely to vote for the political party that does not control the state government."
- Persuasive critique?
- More federal court decisions against voter ID laws in 2016: **NC, ND, Texas, Kansas, Wisconsin.**
- UW-Madison study found that nearly **17,000** voters in Milwaukee and Dane counties likely **kept from voting in 2016** elections by voter ID law. Also that turnout in 2016 was about 69 percent, the lowest in a presidential election year since 2000. So conceivable that ID law flipped the state from D to R. Some critics fault that study.

Tom Toles (WP) on Voter Suppression



Turn Now to the Major Causes of Polarization and Incivility

- **Why these shifts have occurred.** The causes of this new polarized political environment.
- **What might be done to reverse it and restore some semblance of civil discourse?**
- **There are many causes, long term and short term.**

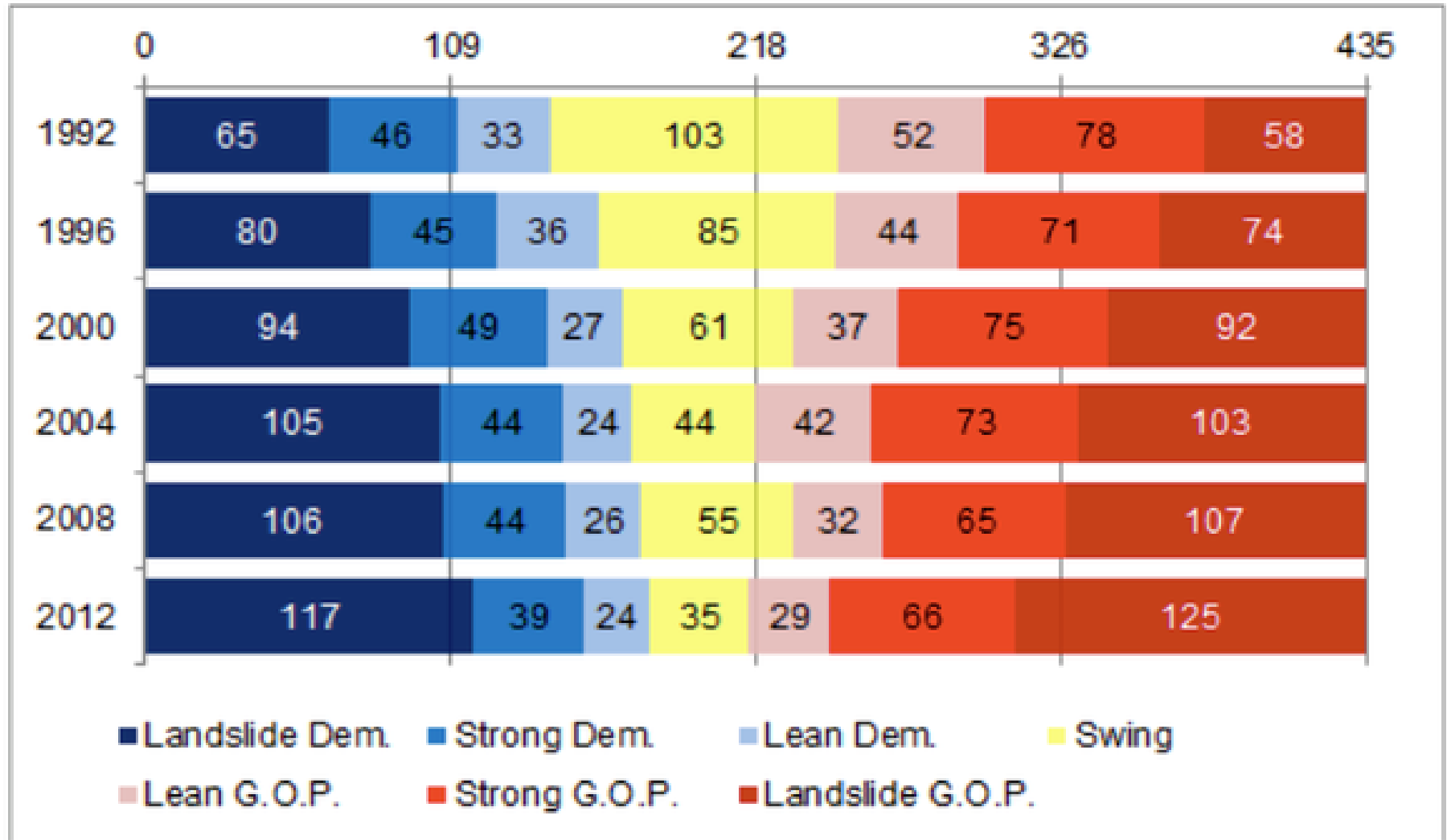
Growth of Government and Reaction

- Long term: Dating to the Depression of the 1930s and post-World War II era, and the **growth in government**. Social Security and other actions in 1930s; Post-War international actions/defense. Then **Great Society** in 1960s: Medicare, Medicaid, civil rights. In 1970s: consumer protection, auto safety, and environmental protection programs.
- All sparked **conservative reaction**. Esp. Goldwater 1964; Reagan in 1980 and 1984. **Gingrich in 1994**. Tea Party in 2010. So called “alt right” in 2010s. Government as the problem, not the solution.

Conservation Reaction Grows: Competition for House Seats Declines

- Sharp **ideological divisions in Congress begin 1994.**
- Loss of previous moderate voices in both parties; moderates lose in **party primary contests.**
- The **loss of competitive districts** at both the state and federal level for a number of reasons.
- **Gerrymandering** to create safe seats—by both parties. In 2014, about **39 of 435** in House were competitive. Est. for **2018 by NY Times was 48.**
- As percentage, **95 percent** of House incumbents seeking reelection won in 2014. In 2016, **97 percent** won. But in 2018, dropped to **91 percent.**

Loss of Competitive Seats in House: Analysis from Nate Silver of 538



Legislative Districting: National and State

- In WI, Common Cause found in a May 2015 report that Wisconsin's state legislative races were **far less competitive in 2014 than they were in 2010**. Much the same in 2016 and 2018.
- Only about 10% of successful candidates won by fewer than 10 percentage points. That is, 90% won by more than a competitive 55% to 45%.
- Put otherwise, the **vast majority of state legislative elections were not really in doubt**. Nearly all incumbents were virtually assured of reelection. Is this what we want? Competition forces moderation.
- Will return to this later. Solutions in Iowa and California, and other states.

Public Participation in Politics Declines

- A major underlying cause: most Americans do not pay attention to government and politics, not informed, and do not participate. Turnout in **2014** midterm election **lowest in over 60 years**: 33%; in 2018 rose to 47%. WI always higher. About **60% in 2018**, 2nd highest in nation.
- WI: Voter turnout **dropped in 2016** compared to 2012. **69.6%** of eligible voters. Nationally, the turnout rate was **58.6 %**, about the same as in 2012 election.
- Most voters **not well informed**; and the media do not help much—esp. in 2016 and particularly on **issues**.

Loss of a Common Political Culture

- The **loss of a common American culture** and a sense of community and purpose.
- Instead, we have divisions based on income , class, or race and particularized interests. Affects where people live. San Francisco, Portland, Seattle are not Dallas, Colorado Springs, or Waukesha. California and Oregon are not Alabama or Mississippi.
- Nation is **more heterogeneous** today, changing demographics; leads to more conflict, perceived difference in values.
- Society's **divisions** become more important than shared values. Esp. education level and urban versus rural residence. Two cultures.

Loss of Confidence in Growth and Opportunities

- Economic growth and **prosperity stalled**, especially for the middle class and working class. Real wage decline, breeding resentment against minorities, the poor, refugees, and immigrants. Politicians play on these concerns.
- The wealthy and upper-middle income are doing well (top .1%, 1%, and 10%) , but many others are not; their economic concerns can be exploited.
- Tea Party, alt right, and Trump movements build on such reaction and resentment. So too Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren within Democratic Party.

The Power of Conservative Think Tanks

- Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Heartland Institute, ALEC, State Policy Network, and in WI: Bradley Foundation, MacIver.
- Conservatives smart to do this, but fosters ideological thinking, and possibly harms their cause long term.
- This movement attracts much funding , creates issue studies/papers, and mobilizes conservative electorate. Very successful strategically. Much more than on the left.
- Many supporters become talented advocates for new views, enter politics and law schools, appointed to the judiciary.
- **No full liberal parallel**, though now **State Innovation Exchange** seek to rival **ALEC**. Also, Center for American Progress, and others.

Decline of Mass Market News Media

- The fading away of **mass market news media**.
- The old CBS, NBS, ABC built a common sense of reality in the nation. People trusted that what they heard was true. High standards of journalistic reporting.
- Not much these days. Stories spread **without regard to their truth** on social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube. So called “fake news,” in reality “lies.”
- Effects of the change include a **less well-informed electorate** and a loss of common sense of purpose.
- Despite some recent gains in viewership, the long-term trend for **network news** audiences is downward. Since 1980, viewership is **down by 55%**. From about 50 million to 20 million over 30 years.
- February 2018: Registered voters’ top three news sources: Fox News (30%); local news channel (26%); CNN (26%).

PBS Poll: Distrust of Media Rising

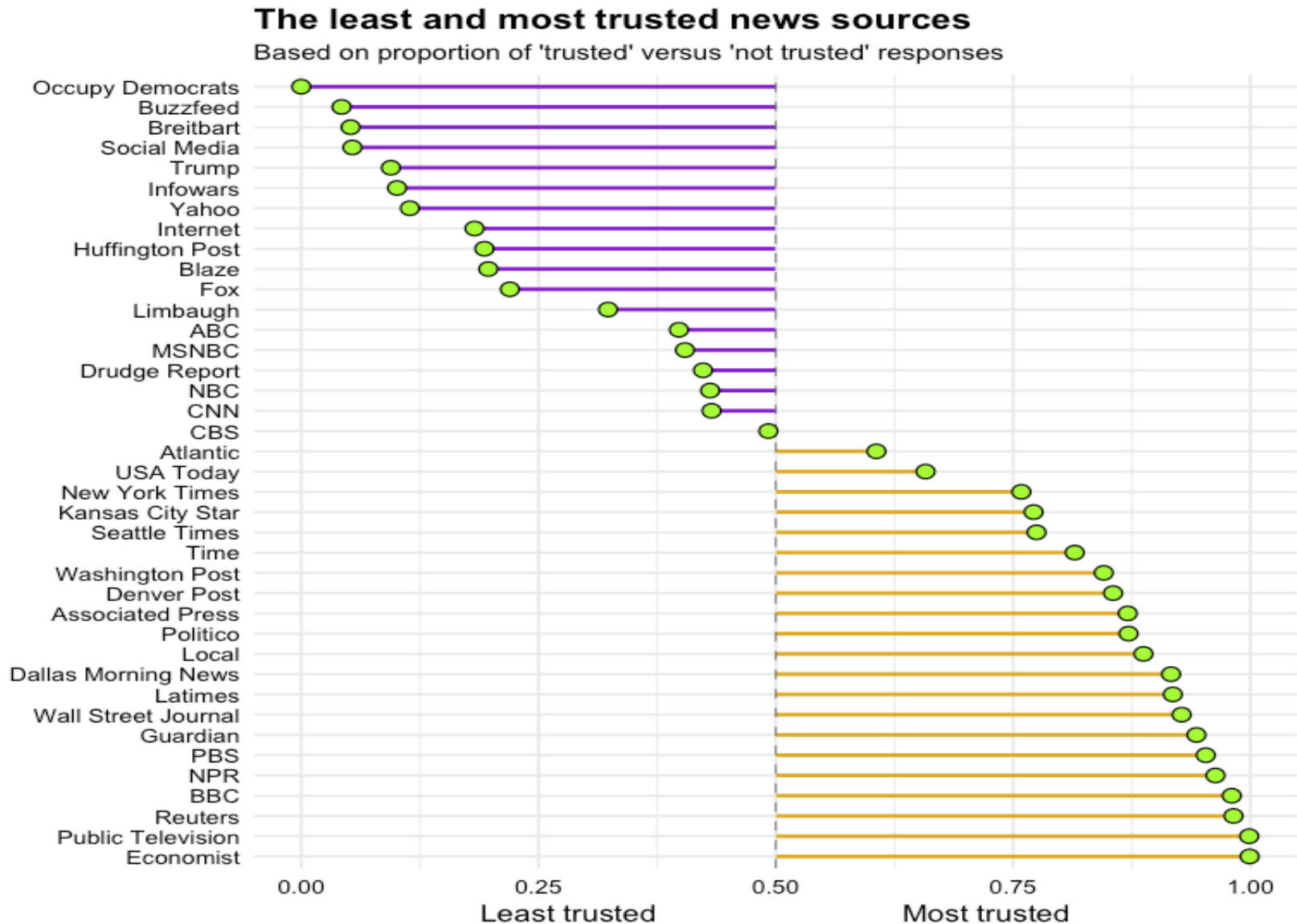
HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE MEDIA?



SOURCE: PBS NEWS HOUR/NPR/MARIST

THIS SURVEY OF 1,205 ADULTS WAS CONDUCTED JUNE 21ST THROUGH JUNE 25TH, 2017

But Wide Variation in Trust of Media: University of Missouri Study July 2017



Changes in News Media Continued

- In 2015: average age of network evening news consumer was about 53; in 2017, CNN's viewers median age was 60, and both Fox News and MSNBC were at **65**. This is why you see so many pharmaceutical ads!
- **Generational divide**: Majority of baby boomers get political news from cable television news. Majority of millennials and Gen Xers rely on Facebook and other social media.
- **PBS News Hour** remains strong and covers controversial issues thoroughly and well, and balanced. So do major papers on both sides such as **NY Times**, **Washington Post**, and **Wall Street Journal**. And business news: **Bloomberg BusinessWeek**.
- Not the case with most news shows, including local TV news. **Stories are brief; controversies not well explained.**
- Can citizens really learn much about the issues?

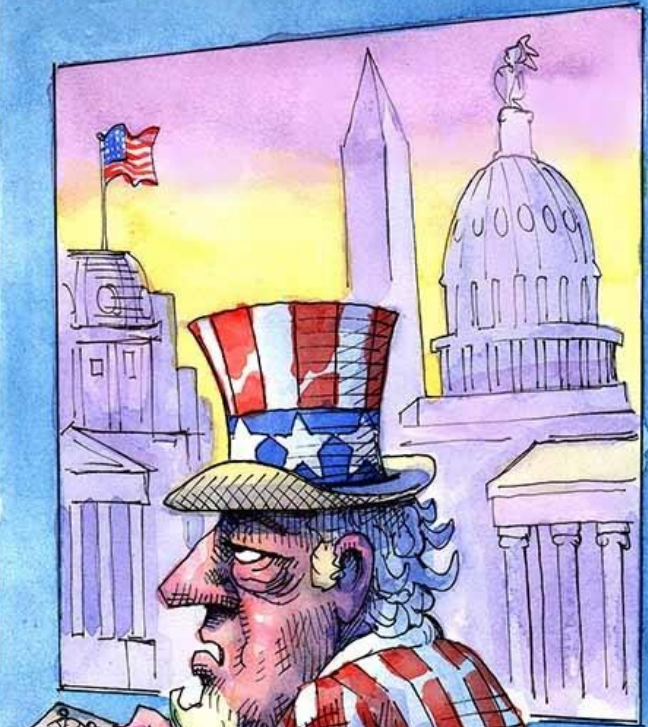
The Rise of New Media

- **Politically-Oriented Talk Radio and TV News Shows**, and news consolidation sites on both sides.
- Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Ann Coulter, Tomi Lahren and others on right-leaning talk radio, Twitter, etc.: **Fox News/Breitbart/Drudge Report/Infowars** (Alex Jones); Charlie Sykes now disavows what he calls the lunatic fringe with its “righteous rage” and “weapons-grade nut-jobbery.”
- On left, **MSNBC, Daily Kos, Huffington Post: Rachel Maddow** and others attract passionate followers.
- But watch for “**outrage industry.**” **Lots of fake news** and conspiracy theories that circulate and affect millions.
- Highly polarized political information **fractures the public.** **A major source of incivility today.** Opinions reinforced, opposition ridiculed. **Views become extreme.** Amplified by **social media.** Moderate voices not heard or respected.

One Example: Maggie Haberman of New York Times on Pulling Back from Twitter

- “The viciousness, toxic partisan anger, intellectual dishonesty, motive-questioning and sexism are at all-time highs, with no end in sight.”
- “It is a place where people who are understandably upset about any number of things go to feed their anger, where the underbelly of free speech is at its most bilious.”

CABLE NEWS GUIDE			
2	HECTORING	SCOLDING	HOWL
3	HYPERVENTILATION		PITHY RE
4	BADGERING	BROWBEATING	BOMBAS
5	HOWLERS	SCREECHERS	SCREA
6	BREAKFAST OF OUTRAGES	BRUNCH OF OUTRAGES	LUNCH OUTR
7	APPALLED AND UNINFORMED	INDIGNANT AND UNINFORMED	INCENS AND UNIN
8	BLATHER	PRATTLE	CHATTER JABE
9	NEVER-ENDING HARANGUES		
10	UNHINGED HYSTERIA	12 ANGRY FOL	



M. WUERKER
POLITICO Andrews McMeel

Effects of the New News Media

- **Partisanship shapes beliefs** about political leaders: their competence, honesty, personal character.
- For both parties, views highly negative and dismissive.
- See effects also in **letters** to editor and **comments** in newspapers. Highly partisan and lacking in civility, to put it mildly. **Anonymous commentary** comes with no constraints. Easy to abuse.
- But much of this from a small minority of the population. Aug. 2017 WP poll: only 10% supported so-called alt right.

Campaign Finance: Not Well Regulated

- ***Citizens United v. FEC*** decision of 2010; and ***McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*** of 2014. No limits on what corporations/unions can contribute; and no aggregate limits on individual contributions to federal candidates.
- Also **lack of effective oversight** of campaign spending by the IRS and an incapacitated FEC.
- Elections increasingly expensive. 2014 total was est. **\$3.7 billion for House and Senate**. Spending by candidates, parties, and most outside groups (see OpenSecrets.org). In **2016: \$4.26 billion**.
- **Total for all federal elections in 2016: \$6.8 billion**.
- **Wealthy individuals and corporations** dominate campaign spending.

Campaign Finance II

- Wesleyan Media Project in 2014: high level of negative ads. **Increasingly negative** since 2010 *Citizens United*.
- Ads by **outside groups**, esp. “dark money” ads, more negative than those by candidates themselves.
- **PACs and Super PACS** can accept **unlimited** contributions from individuals and corporations, and they spent **\$1.5 billion** in 2016 elections, and \$1.2 billion in 2018 midterms.
- More than **40% of that** came from just **50 mega-donors** and their families: Examples: Robert Mercer and Sheldon Adelson on the right and Tom Steyer and Michael Bloomberg on the left.
- Just 11 of the largest donors gave a total of \$1 billion to super PACS in past eight years. Adelson and wife gave \$205 million over past two election cycles.

Campaign Spending Keeps Rising

- **WI Recall elections of 2012.** More than **half of the money spent** on the recalls came from **undisclosed donors**.
- Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, puts the total for **recall election** at **\$81 million**. Governor's race in 2014: **\$81.8 million**.
- Spending unequal: 2014 Governor's race. WI Democracy Campaign: "Republican candidates and outside groups spent an estimated **\$49 million** – 50 percent more than the estimated **\$32.8 million** spent by Democratic candidates and groups in the race."
- 2016 Senate race: Johnson v. Feingold. **Just two people/families in WI donated \$12 million to Johnson!** Both parties have wealthy donors: Dems: Soros, Steyer, Bloomberg, others; Reps: Mercer, Koch, Adelson, more.

Spending in 2018 Elections

- WI Democracy Campaign: **Outside groups** spent \$61 million on Wisconsin's 2018 midterm election. Twice as much as previous two midterm elections combined.
- Spending equally heavy on both sides. Groups backing Republicans spent \$31 million and those backing Democrats spent \$30 million.
- These numbers include both direct advocacy for a candidate and issue ads.

Another Cause of Polarization: Growth of Special Interests, aka “the Swamp”

- Enormous growth in **interest group activity in Washington, D.C.** after 1970.
- In D.C., groups are very tightly connected to Congress, the White House, and executive departments. They heavily recruit former congresspersons to keep those connections.
- Whoever wins elections, the interest groups remain, from Wall Street financial institutions to labor unions, health insurance companies, defense industry, pharmaceutical companies, oil and gas businesses, mining industry, automakers, and more.
- Keeps **both parties** dependent on such groups for campaign money and support.

Decline of Respect for Facts, Science, and Rationality: Even More Troubling!

- Rise of **anti-intellectualism** in American culture.
- We have solid studies in policy analysis, economics, science, but **often ignored/twisted** by policymakers and others: tax cuts and their effects, climate change and energy, what promotes job creation, the effects of global trade, or impact of immigration on U.S.
- **Scientific** groups such as the National Academy of Sciences not respected as much as before. Nor economists, DNR scientists, or university faculty.
- Instead of clear thinking and good analysis, we get **ideological position taking** and **denial of legitimacy** of sound analysis. Applies to both parties.

Some Conclusions: Then Break

- We'll turn next to possible solutions to the problem of political polarization and incivility—such as campaign finance reform and legislative districting reforms.
- No quick fixes.
- But some concrete steps that could be taken on campaign finance, legislative districting, voter education, and more.
- We'll focus much more on discussion of these next week. Much less on my recounting of the broad picture.
- Questions?

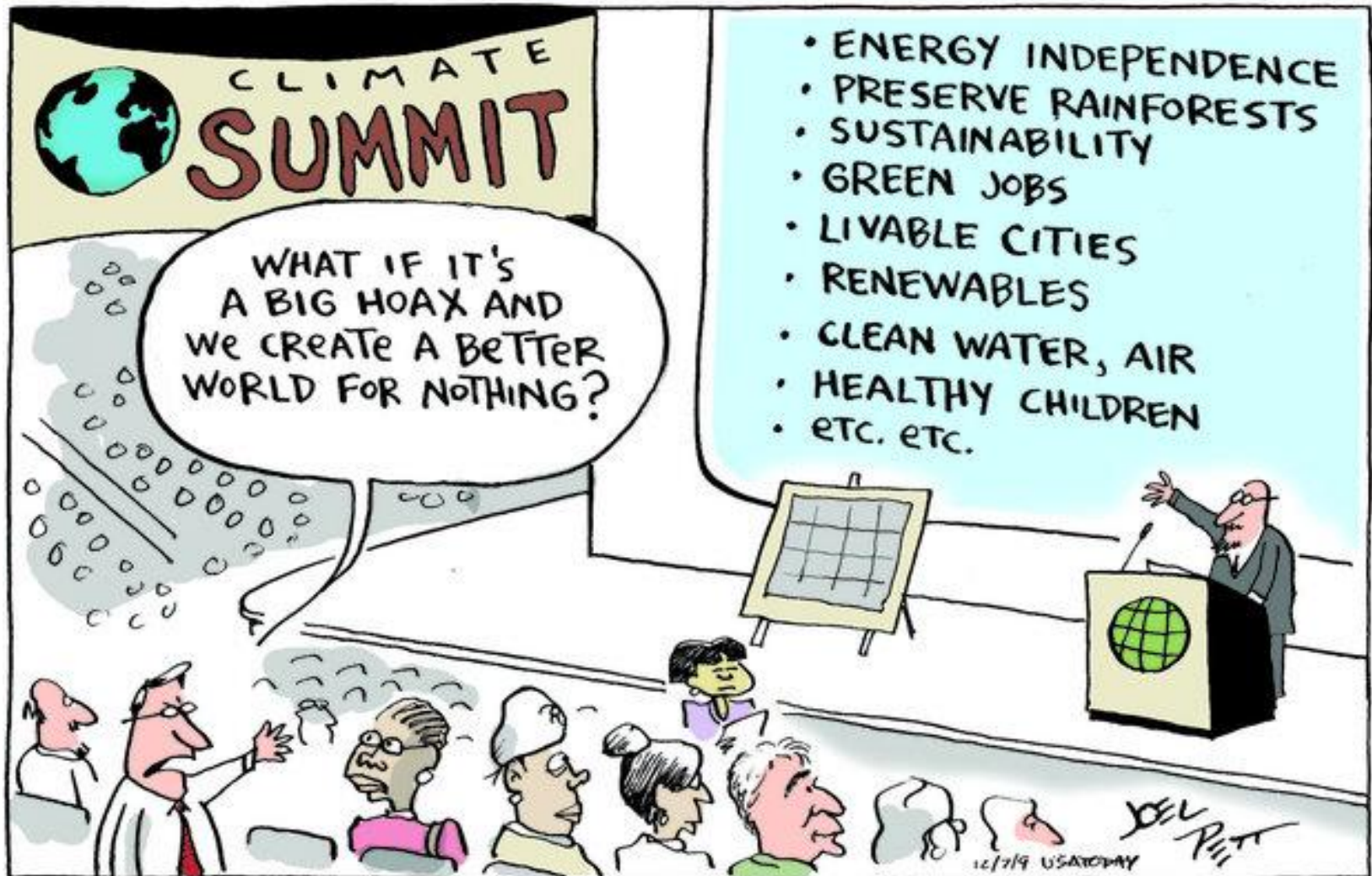
Part II of Politics, Government, and Civility

- We looked initially at the problem of political polarization and incivility and the causes:
- growth of federal government, regulation, and spending since 1940s, and esp. since 1964. And the reaction to this growth.
- loss of competitive legislative districts due to gerrymandering and other reasons;
- loss of common political culture or shared values;
- rise of conservative groups and mobilization of conservatives; to a lesser extent, also on the left.

Causes of Polarization and Incivility Continued

- decline of the mass media news shows and rise of ideologically-driven news programs/talk radio;
- campaign finance laws and spending on elections;
- growth of special interests and their influence on government;
- decline of respect for science: anti-intellectualism.

Many Consequences, Including Poor Policy Decisions



on

Many Such Poor Policy Decisions Evident in WI and Nation

- **Education**, and esp. neglect of early childhood education
- **Infrastructure** ignored and delayed (highways, bridges, tunnels, rail, airports, electrical grid, internet).
- **Immigration** reform delayed.
- **Job creation and economic growth.** Is either party right?
- **Tax reform** and operation of Internal Revenue Service.
- **Defense spending** and reduction in waste and inefficiency. Many obsolete military bases and weapons systems still funded.
- **Entitlement and social programs reform:** Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, welfare programs. Rising percentage of elderly a fiscal challenge.

What Can Be Done to Restore Sensible Politics and Civility?

- What do **you** think? What **should** we do? What can we do?
- **No simple solutions**, though much we can do if public support is there.
- Much depends on public willingness to get involved, and whether we can change the **rules governing elections and campaigns**.
- **Effort should be bipartisan and diverse solutions should be explored**.
- Beware of any solution supported by only one of the two major parties. They are self-serving, much like voter ID laws or rejection of public financing of political campaigns. Or gerrymandering.

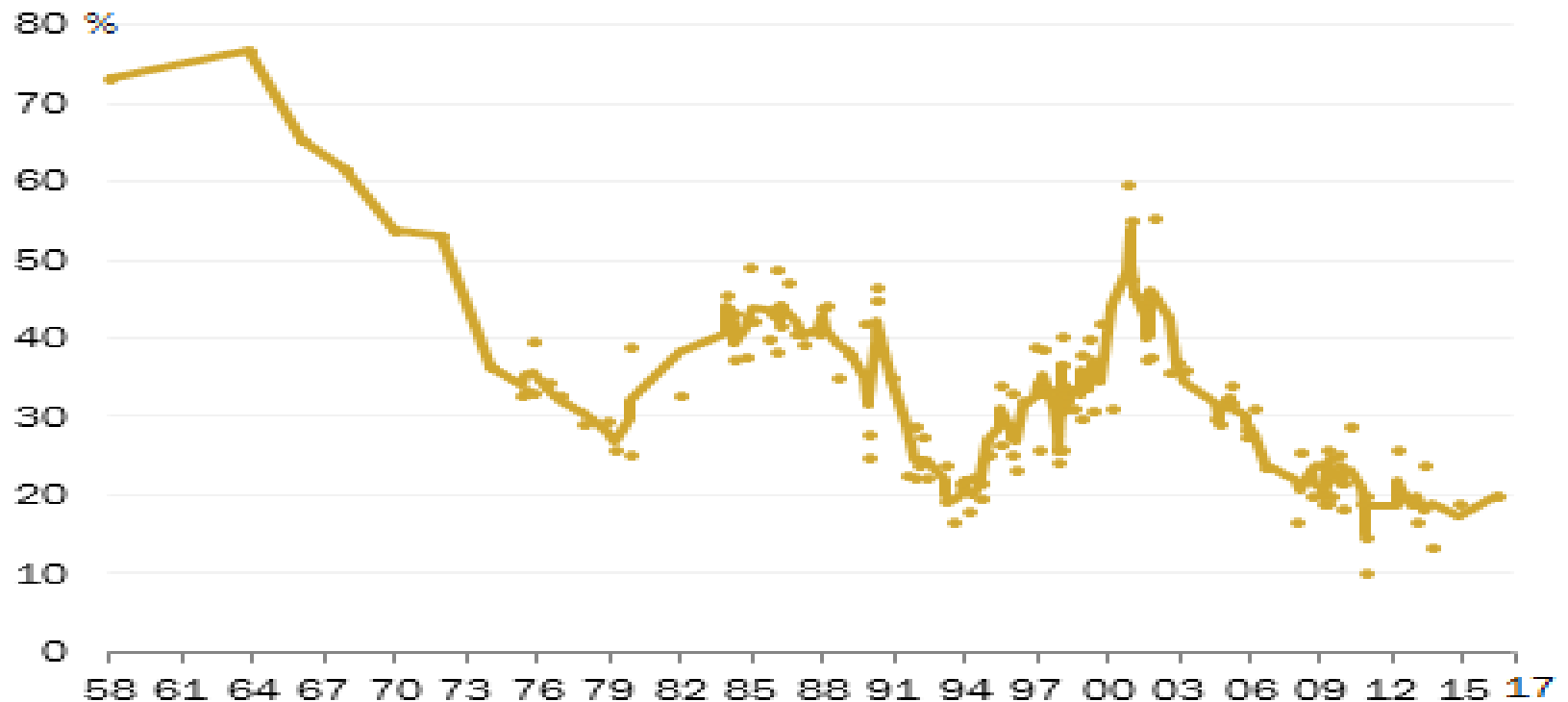
Public Education and Civics Training

- **Public education and access by citizens to reliable information.** Not what it used to be, but could be improved.
- **Formal education**, as in civics classes in high school, but also **many other ways** to inform the public.
- Little information and even less interest on public's part.
- Some **sample poll data** on public trust and confidence in government. Also on public knowledge of government.

Pew Research Center April 2017

Public trust in government remains near historic lows

Trust the federal government to do what is right just about always/most of the time...



Notes: From 1976-2016 the trend line represents a three-survey moving average.

Source: Survey conducted April 5-11, 2017.

Trend sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN polls.

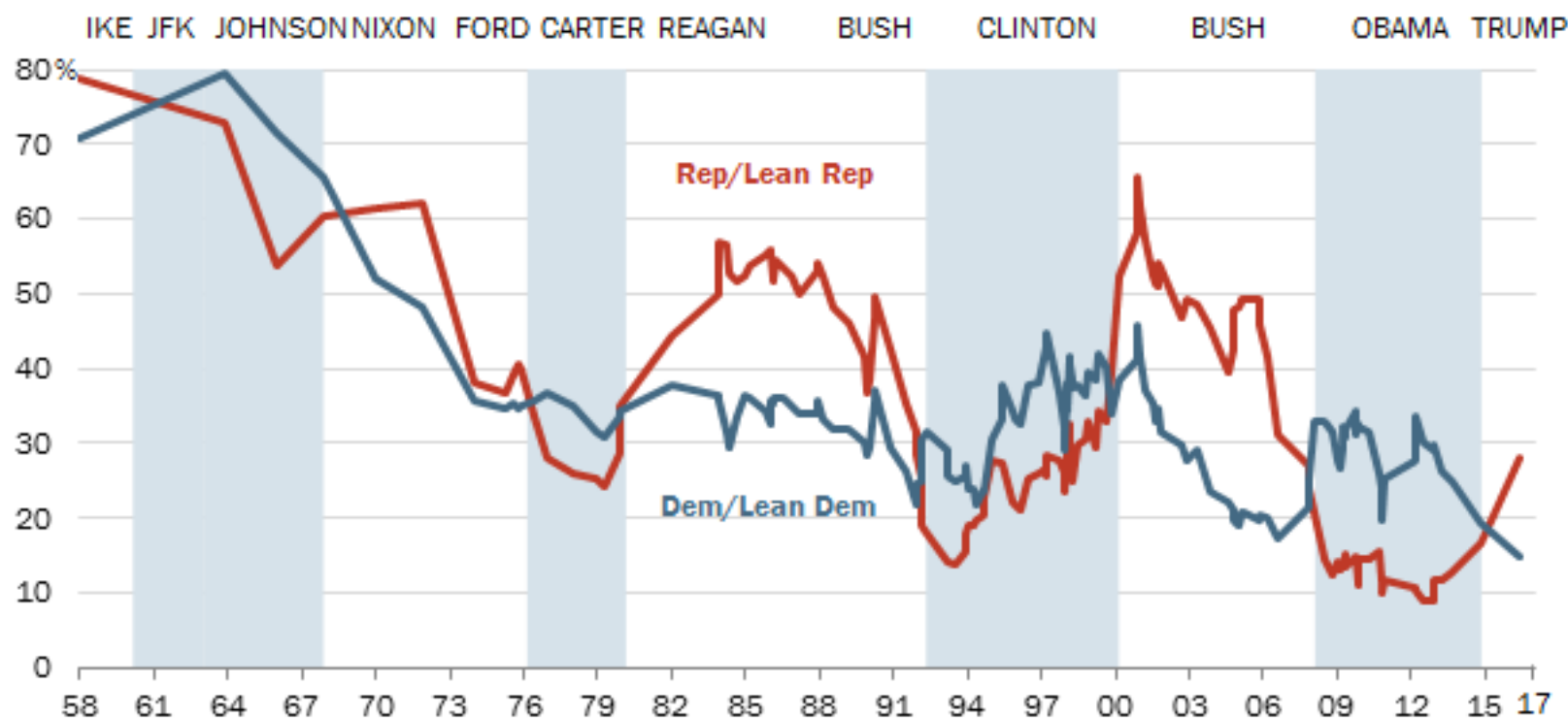
Pew Trust in Gov't Survey 1958-2014

- Trust in the government just about always or most of the time. Summary of various polls over long period of time
- 1960: 73%
- 1980: 25%
- 1990: 35%
- October 2001: 55%
- January 2009: 25%
- February 2014: 24%
- April 2017: 20%; but Reps now trust gov't more than do Dems.

Trust in Government by Party

Trust in government climbs among Republicans, falls among Democrats

Trust the federal government to do what is right just about always/most of the time...



Notes: From 1976-2016 the trend line represents a three-survey moving average.

Source: Survey conducted April 5-11, 2017.

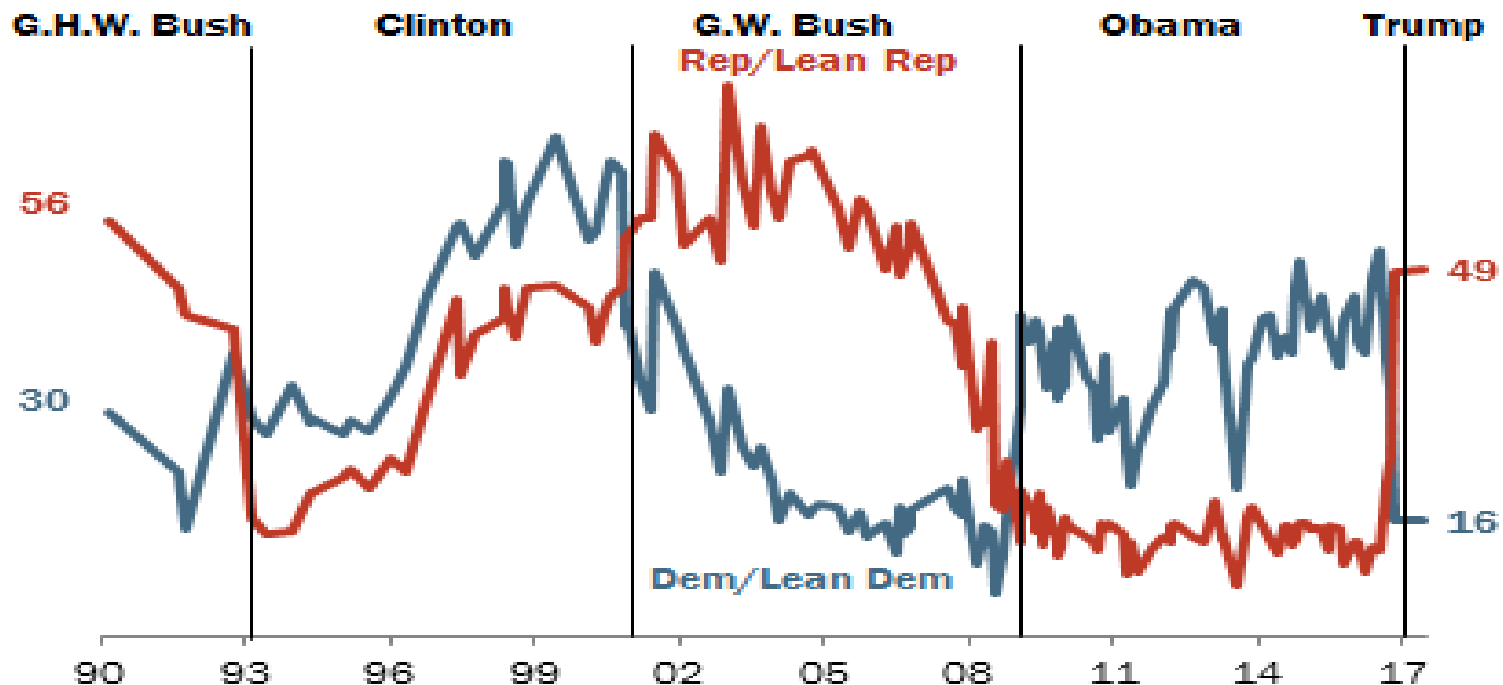
Trend sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Satisfaction with State of Union By Party

Partisans' satisfaction with the state of the nation shifts sharply after Trump's election

% saying they are satisfied with the way things are going in this country today...



Source: Survey conducted April 5-11, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

April 2016 Poll on Confidence

- How well do you feel the government in Washington **represents the views of people like yourself?** April 2016 Opinion Research Corp.
- Very well 5%
- Somewhat well 19%
- Not too well 35%
- Not at all well 41%
- **76% say not too well or not at all well.** Only 24% positive. Perhaps even lower today.

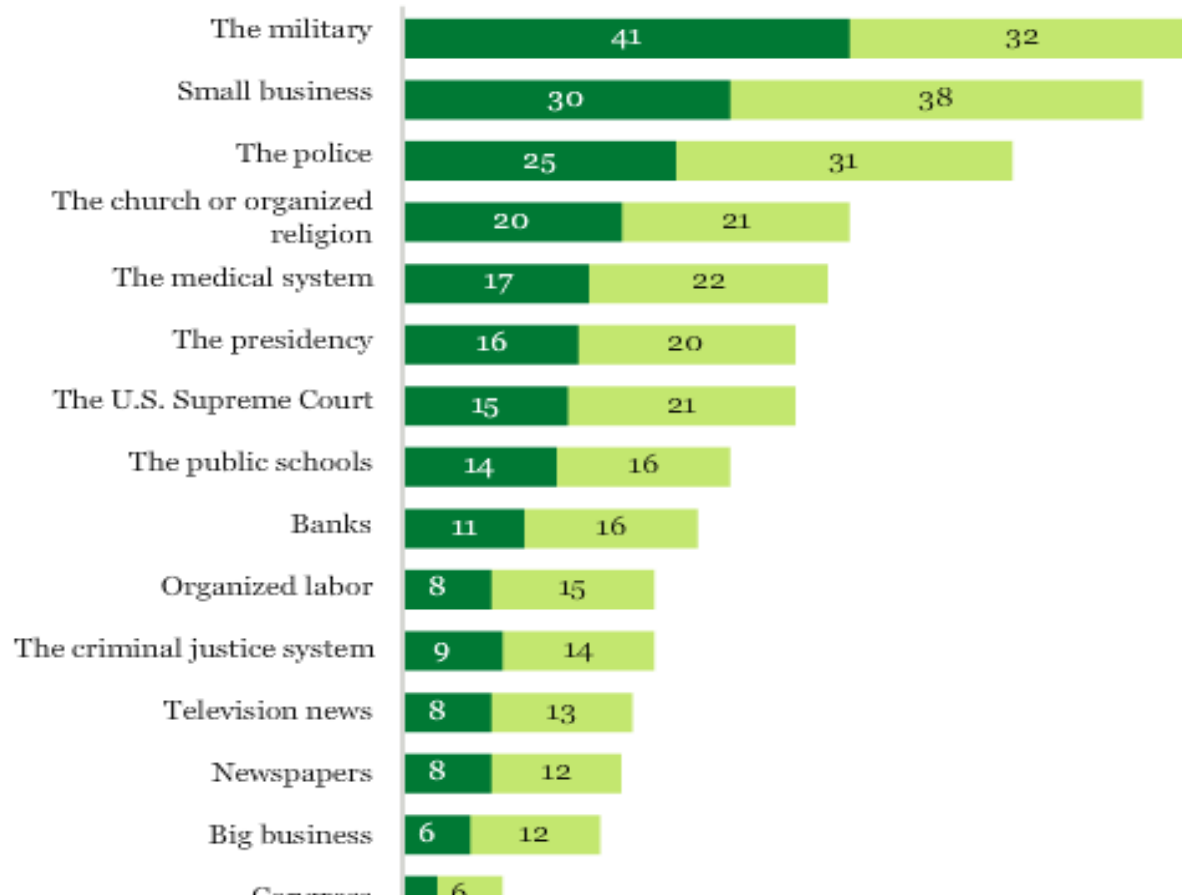
Trust Decline Not Just in Gov't.: Similar Poll in 2018, Same Results

I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one -- a great deal, quite a lot, some or very little?

June 1-5, 2016

■ % Great deal

■ % Quite a lot



Public Sees a Rise in Corruption in Gov't.

- A late 2018 survey by **Transparency International**, shows that the U.S. government and some key institutions of power have a long way to go to win citizens' trust.
- U.S. perceived to be **more corrupt** than at any time since 2011.
- In 2017 survey, **44 percent** of Americans believe that corruption is **pervasive in the White House**, up from 36 per cent in 2016.
- Also, in 2017 survey, **38 percent** believe corruption is **pervasive in Congress**.
- Almost 7 out of 10 people believe the government is failing to fight corruption.

How to Restore Trust in Politics and Government?

- How do we restore public trust that has eroded so much? What will work?
- Foster a different political environment? In schools and outside.
- Restore a sense of civic responsibility?
- Improve understanding of political ideas and tolerance and legitimacy. A concern for the general public welfare?

Civics Knowledge Remains Low

- Annenberg Public Policy Center Survey of Sept. 2016
- **Only 26%** of American public could name the three branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial), a decline from 2014 survey.
- **31%** could not name **any** of the three branches.
- Patrick Egan, *NY Times*: “too many Americans are ill equipped to perform the basic functions of citizenship,” such as being able to distinguish political and public policy truth from falsehoods or fake news.
- He adds, regarding our educational system: we have become “negligent in teaching the owner’s manual of citizenship.”

What Americans Do Not Know

- A **Xavier University study in 2012** found that while more than 97% of immigrants pass a basic civics test, **one in three Americans could not pass it.**
- 85 percent could not define "the rule of law."
- 75 percent did not know function of the judicial branch.
- 71 percent were unable to identify the Constitution as the "supreme law of the land."
- 63 percent could not name one of their state's Senators.
- 62 percent did not know the name the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.
- 62 percent could not name the governor of their state.
- 57 percent could not define an "amendment."

What About Current Issues?

How many people do you think can answer some simple public policy questions? Can you?

- Can you name three of the main features of the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare?
- What was Obama's Clean Power Plan and who in government oversees it? What did it do?
- What were the major differences between Hillary Clinton's proposals on climate change policy and those of Donald Trump?
- Can you name three of the rights guaranteed by the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution?

Can We Improve Media Coverage?

- **What about improving journalistic coverage of public affairs?** Would this help? How would we bring that about?
- Make politics important to people once again. Appeal more to **younger voters** who are especially disengaged. How do we do this?
- And media **should cover** what the Governor and legislature are doing! Few people are well-informed on actions proposed and what was done, and the costs and impacts. Elections are not on the issues.
- Same for Congress. Little coverage of legislator actions, voting on bills, the process. What we get tends to be negative. Feeds cynicism.
- Social media, such as Facebook, can help.

Increase Civic Engagement?

- What can be done to improve the nature of campaigns and elections?
- Sponsor more **candidate forums, and what kind?**
- Bring people together to discuss the issues. **Town hall meeting** formats might discourage anger and rancor and help to build a common understanding of what needs to be done, e.g., on schools, health care, infrastructure, environment, urban redevelopment.
- Example in Bay Area Community Council; Brown County 20/20 conference and study groups.

Candidate Recruitment/Political Dialogue

- Run for office yourself? Encourage friends and neighbors to do so?
- Help to **recruit more candidates** and participants in election campaigns. Process is far too narrow today.
- Promote broader party **primaries over more narrow caucuses or conventions** that cater to extreme elements in the party.
- Work with parties and other groups to **recruit a new generation of politically-engaged citizens.**
- Demand that candidates for office and incumbents **meet with citizens on a regular basis** and respond to questions in person. Foster real representation.

Campaign Finance Reform

- The **role of money in politics** must change.
- Far too much is spent on campaigns on both sides. Means elected officials and candidates become dependent on donors.
- Far too much **negative campaigning**, esp. TV ads by outside and ideological groups. Undisclosed sources of funding.
- Serious campaign finance reform. Public financing?
- Overturn *Citizens United* decision and restore some reasonable limits on campaign spending and reporting. By both sides.

Campaign Regulation and Reporting

- Even without campaign finance reform, could **enforce current laws** that often are ignored. Federal Election Commission (FEC) is weak, too divided politically to do much: 3 Democrats and 3 Republicans; unable to reach consensus. Chair in 2015: “People think the F.E.C. is dysfunctional. It’s worse than dysfunctional.”
- We need **more regulation and reporting** on campaigns, particularly disclosure of sources of money and limiting role of “outside” groups. The Disclose Act in Congress. Transparency.
- We need to know and publicize **where the money is coming from**, and what agendas the groups or individuals have. Press doesn’t cover and many people are unaware.

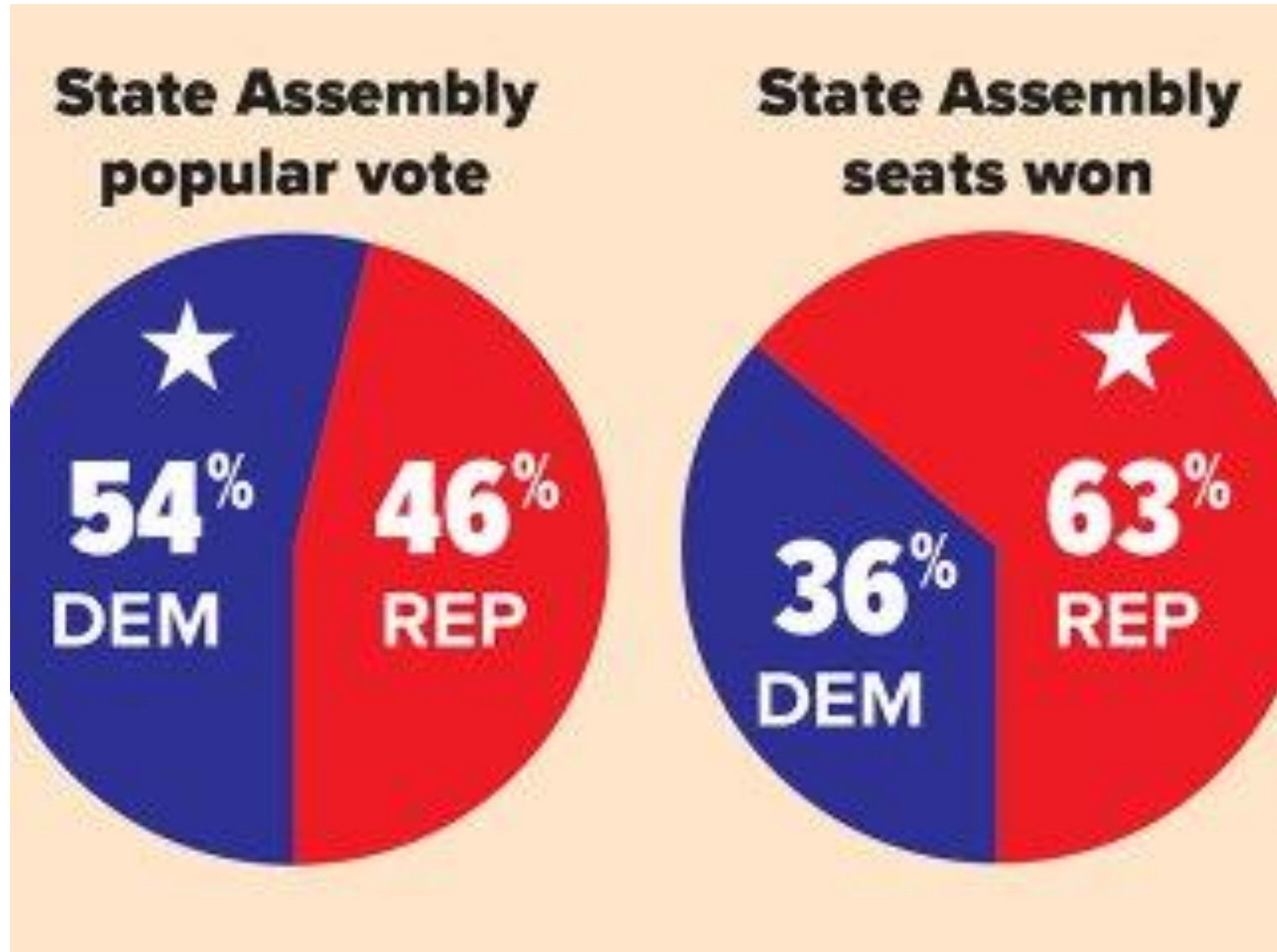
Reform of Political Parties

- Should add to the list the possibility of fostering third or minor parties. Or at least independents as a force in politics. Now about one-third of electorate. See this in Trump and Sanders campaigns in 2016.
- Time for a centrist party? A new Republican Party of alt right supporters? Another with conventional Republicans base? Will that work in U.S.?
- Election rules tend to block third party efforts, but a public push might send a lesson to two major parties about public preference for cooperation and problem solving.

Reform Legislative Districting

- **In 2012**, more people voted for Democrats than for Republicans for Congress. Yet Republicans won a majority of the congressional delegation by a large margin.
- WI GOP candidates in 2012 state Assembly races received 168,000 **fewer votes** than their Democratic counterparts. Still, the GOP won 60 of the 99 seats. How? Redistricting strongly favored GOP and underrepresented Democrats. See next page.
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 2015: “Citizens benefit from competitive politics that encourage ideas from across the political spectrum. A more competitive politics in Wisconsin **would force both sides to listen more often to voters — and to one another** — and would force politicians to tailor ideas to a broader swath of the electorate.”

Effects of Gerrymandering: WI 2018



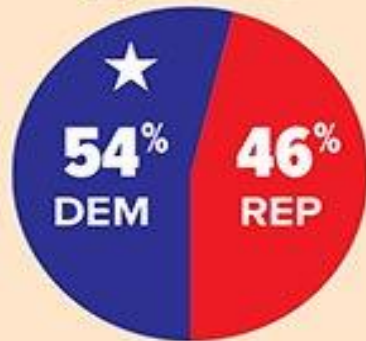
Effects of Gerrymandering: WI 2018

How the people voted

Democrats won the popular vote for all statewide races and the Assembly. But they are denied proportional representation in the Assembly.

★ = winner

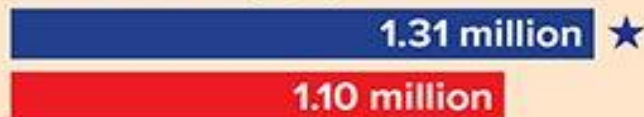
State Assembly popular vote



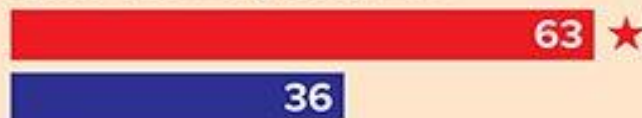
State Assembly seats won



State Assembly popular vote



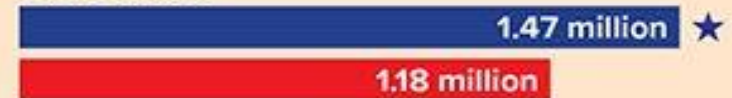
State Assembly seats won



Governor



U.S. Senate



Attorney General



State Treasurer



Secretary of State



Party Votes and Seats in the House

- **November 2016:** federal court panel finds the WI 2011 redistricting law to be unconstitutional. S. Ct. did not resolve yet.. WI case to be heard in federal court in spring of 2019, then back to S. Ct., in time for 2020 elections. In similar case, North Carolina will have to redraw district lines after 2018 elections.
- Sample result from **Wisconsin's Eight House Districts** in 2016
- **Republicans:** 1,270,279 votes (**45.8%**) and five seats (although no Rep. candidates ran in two districts)
- **Democrats:** 1,379,996 votes (**49.75%**) and three seats

Redistricting Effects National Level

- In **2016**, Republicans **won 49.9 of votes** cast for the House of Representatives nationwide. But they **got 55.2% of the seats**.
- Democrats, as a result, won a smaller share of seats than they did votes: **44.8%** of seats as compared to **47.3%** of the votes.”
- So the parties were **2.6% apart** on the national vote, but the seat differential is **10.4%**. From a Brookings Institution study.
- Associated Press study in June 2017 finds much the same: **In 2016, Rep. had 1% margin in votes but 10% margin in seats in the House. That means 22 House seats.** A shift of 23 or so seats gives Dems control of House.
- **Senate** also distorts public views with two seats per state regardless of population. Calif. with 40 million people gets same two seats as Wyo. with 600,000. No fix is likely.

Reform Legislative Districting II

- Charles Blow in New York Times, March 2017, after initial failure of Republican American Health Care Act in House.
- “In the redrawing of districts following the 2010 census, Republicans created incredibly safe, **ideologically pure** districts with fewer dissenters. This protected more seats, but it also meant that the people who hold those seats have **little to no incentive to ever compromise.**”
- “Republicans created hardline districts that produced hardline congressmen: obstructionist **absolutists are gerrymandering’s political offspring.**”
- But we could say much the same about liberal Democratic districts that also reflect partisan gerrymandering.
- Either way, you get **safe seats** and members who are **not inclined to compromise** because their constituents want them to be political purists. No gain for cooperation.

Redistricting: Change the Law

- How to fix this problem, which some see as a crisis of legitimacy? One way to change legislative redistricting.
- Rely on nonpartisan commission to draw district lines, such as Legislative Reference Bureau in WI. This is the Iowa model.
- In late 2014, Ohio legislature agreed to nonpartisan state legislative districting measure, which voters overwhelmingly approved in Nov. 2015.
- In February 2018, PA Supreme Court redrew the congressional district maps after the state legislature could not agree. Old maps **gave Reps. 13 of 18 seats** despite equal division of parties among PA electorate. Reps. challenged, but U.S. S. Ct. let the new map stay. Will be in effect for 2018 House elections.
- **More than 15 states** now use independent commissions or similar devices to draw congressional district lines. So Wisconsin could do this.

Redistricting Reforms: CA, Iowa, and Ohio

- **California** uses a **14-person citizen redistricting commission** made up of five Democrats, five Republicans, plus four people not affiliated with either party. In 2011, the commission redrew district lines. Significantly broadened the diversity of districts.
- **Iowa** relies on **non-partisan legislative staff** to develop maps for the Iowa House and Senate, and U.S. House districts, with no use of political or election data. It also uses a five person advisory commission. Resulting plan is then presented to the state legislature for up or down vote.
- **Ohio**: state legislators can approve a map only with a 60 percent supermajority, and they need 50 percent of the minority party. If no agreement, process goes to a seven-member bipartisan commission, and it can only approve a plan with support of at least two members of the minority party in the legislature.
- But redistricting reform will not change the nationwide pattern of like-minded voters congregating in districts.

Reform Other Election Laws

- **Remove barriers to** registration and voting. The “rigged election” argument. But rigged which way?
- 50 million eligible Americans **remain unregistered**.
- **Encourage** both registration and voting? **Automatic registration?** Oregon did that in 2015; other states in 2016. MA in 2018. 13 states have automatic registration (2018).
- WA state allows voting by mail. A more representative electorate is likely outcome. 37 states allow **early voting**, and one third of voters now cast ballots before election day.
- Extend the **time/days for registration and voting?** Extended hours and weekends? Many states are doing the opposite. Make election day a national holiday, **as Dems propose in H.R. 1?**
- Have an independent **Governmental Accountability Board** to oversee electoral process? Study impacts of any proposals to change election rules.
- **Educate voters** on the issues. At least we have wisconsinvote.org (public radio and TV). But many states do better job of providing information to voters: CA.

Example: Californian Actions 2015

After a record low turnout in previous year's election, Gov. Jerry Brown of California signed legislation designed to increase electoral participation by **automatically registering eligible state voters when they obtain a driver's license.**

The law, which allows Californians to opt out of registering at the Department of Motor Vehicles, puts California at the forefront of efforts across the country to increase electoral participation at a time when many states have added new hurdles, like voter identification laws.

Massachusetts adopted a similar law in 2018. Takes effect in January 2020.

Talk to One Another Across Party Lines

- One of the simplest “reforms” is the easiest. People need to talk to one another across partisan lines.
- Within families, in neighborhoods, in communities, and in groups.
- Try to understand different values and perspectives.
- Searching for what we share in common, such as improving roads, schools, health care, etc.
- Community sustainability efforts.
- Seeking broadly supported solutions to societal problems.

Conclusions

- **Questions?**
- What else is needed?
- What would you like to see done?
- Where do we begin to restore civility to our political conversation in the United States? At home? Work? Meetings? Public comments?
- Esp. challenging after the 2016 presidential election. One of the most negative in years.
- At least in personal conversations and at public meetings, trying to be civil even when we disagree strongly with others on the issues.

What Does the Future Hold? Meeting in White House on November 10, 2016

