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Bridging the Political Divide in the 2008 Presidential Election

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About Richard Reeves

Richard Reeves, senior lecturer at the USC Annenberg School for Communication, is an author and syndicated columnist whose column has appeared in more than 100 newspapers since 1979. A new column also appears on Yahoo! News each Friday. He has received dozens of awards for his work in print, television and film.

Educated as a mechanical engineer, Richard Reeves began his career in journalism at the age of 23, founding the *Phillipsburg Free Press* in Phillipsburg, N.J. He has been a correspondent for the *Newark Evening News* and the *New York Herald Tribune* and was the chief political correspondent of *The New York Times*. He has also written for numerous other publications, becoming national editor and columnist for *Esquire* and *New York Magazine* along the way. Named a “literary lion” by the New York Public Library, Reeves has won a number of print journalism awards and has been a Pulitzer Prize finalist and juror.

In 1975, Reeves published his first book, *A Ford, not a Lincoln*. His *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* is now considered the authoritative work on the 35th president, has won several national awards and was named “Best Non-Fiction Book” of 1993 by *Time* and “Book of the Year” by *Washington Monthly*.

Reeves has also worked extensively on television and in film. He was chief correspondent on “Frontline.” He has made six television films and won all of television’s major documentary awards: the Emmy for “Lights, Camera...Politics!” for ABC News; the Columbia-DuPont Award for “Struggle for Birmingham” for PBS; and the George Foster Peabody Award for “Red Star over Khyber” for PBS. He has also appeared in two feature films, “Dave” and “Seabiscuit.”

In 1998, he won the Carey McWilliams Award of the American Political Science Association for distinguished contributions to the understanding of American politics. He was the Goldman Lecturer on American Civilization and Government at the Library of Congress that year; the lectures were published by Harvard University Press under the title *What the People Know: Freedom and the Press*.

In 2007, W.W. Norton published his biography—and re-creation of the experiments—of Ernest Rutherford, the Nobel prizewinning physicist, who was born on the frontier of New Zealand in 1871 and went on to become the greatest experimental scientist of his time, discovering the unimagined subatomic world we now know and then splitting the atom he first envisioned. He is currently working in the United States and Europe on a history of the Berlin Airlift, **scheduled for publication in 2008.**

Abstract

As America struggles with both foreign and domestic crises, its leaders have increasingly prioritized campaigning above governing. While paying lip service to bipartisanship, politicians have all but ignored their political opponents, adopting former Speaker of the House Thomas “Czar” Reed’s philosophy: “The best system is to have one party govern and the other party watch.” The permanent campaign, as some have called it, has prompted a divisive climate but no long-term solutions on immigration, healthcare, Social Security, global warming and countless other issues. The problem of hyper-partisanship has several contributing factors, from revisions in the House’s seniority system to technological transformations in communication, travel and daily life. Yet throughout American history, the country has seen cycles of unity followed by intense partisan bickering. History shows that perhaps the only way to rule in a bipartisan way is for a president to win with a clear mandate, or rule during a time of national crisis. If that is the case, then the next president of the United States may have the chance to unite the country in a way it has not been for several decades.

The United States is obviously about to change. Not only change presidents, but change its place in the world—and perhaps the way it is governed. It is hard to believe that only eight years ago the catch phrases of American politics and governance were “a uniter, not a divider” and “the world’s only superpower.” Now, the nation is divided over two wars and in what appears to be economic decline, or, at least, a relative loss to new economic powers in other parts of the world.

“Change,” in fact, is both a buzzword and a slogan in the 2008 campaign year. The meaning of the word is in the senses of the beholder, but a dominant element in the current rhetoric has to do with a perceived excess in partisanship and campaigning that deliberately attempts to split the electorate—and an idealization of words and phrases that include “nonpartisan,” “bipartisan” and even “government of national unity.”

American history going back to George Washington’s effective warnings about factions, followed by the partisan struggles of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, would seem to teach us that partisanship is cyclical and that perhaps we are about to enter a period of more unified and cooperative government. Maybe. But

when? Talking about nonpartisanship and/or bipartisanship, to trivialize very serious business, is like talking about the weather. Everyone, or very many people of influence, is talking about these things, almost desperately, but can any of them do anything about it?

The answer is yes, but when? Is this the time? Does the will and the “patriotism” exist in a business, campaigning and governing, where thoughtfulness can be derided as weakness, compromise attacked as betrayal? Is this time of accelerating technological change—when “mainstream” is often a pejorative—the ally or the enemy of any kind of national unity?

“Bipartisanship in Washington is a cyclical thing—it comes and goes in an organic way,” said Robert Merry, who covered Congress and the White House for *The Wall Street Journal* before becoming editor and then president of Congressional Quarterly. “It changes when people get fed up with the status quo.”

True, I think, but some people have more power than others to change the status quo. This paper talks about some of them: high officials and former officials, historians and journalists, state leaders with power over election laws, congressional leaders with influence over the rules of the House and Senate and, most of all, the

candidates for President, senators John McCain and Barack Obama. They are an interesting pair. The Republican, McCain, has gloried in his status as a “maverick” who has crossed party lines more than most in his party. The Democrat, Obama, unknown nationally only five years ago, has an ideological freedom—a *tabula rasa*—rare at this level of American politics. Both have the chance to use the sense of national crisis, to mobilize bipartisanship or nonpartisanship to attempt to meet the challenges that did not seem as evident or desperate just eight years ago.

President Bush, we are told, has no interest in reading a new book by his former press secretary, Scott McClellan. Why should he? His former spokesman says Bush is a fool or a fraud who never placed governing before partisan politics. In *What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception*, McClellan writes, “In the age of the permanent campaign, governing becomes an offshoot of campaigning rather than the other way around” (p. 64).

That is just one of more than 50 times McClellan uses the phrase “permanent campaign” in his description of the many things he found wrong inside the White House—and, in a larger context, what he believes has gone wrong in the governing of America. It is not a new idea. Sidney Blumenthal, as far as I can tell, coined the phrase when he wrote in *The New Yorker* about the administration and style of President Bill Clinton. Not long after, Blumenthal went to work for the Clinton White House. So it goes in the capital city.

McClellan traces his own thinking back to Norman Ornstein and Thomas C. Mann’s essay “The Permanent Campaign and the Future of American Democracy,” published in 2000:

The permanent campaign means that campaigns are nonstop and year-round, and governing/campaigning/governing/campaigning takes place in a continuous loop. Campaign consultants move without pause from the campaign trail to work for the victorious elected officials and help to shape their policy messages and

frame issues for advantage in the next campaign.

Eight years later, the continuous loop is the reality of how Washington works today. The boundaries enclose not only official Washington, particularly the White House and Congress, but also a range of unofficial players, single-issue advocates, lobbyists, lawyers and special interests. And, of course, “The Media.” All in the loop, and many would argue, all part of the problem—for quite a while now.

At a forum on bipartisanship in January 2008 at the University of Oklahoma, a former Republican senator from Maine and former secretary of defense in a Democratic administration, William Cohen, quoted another Republican senator as saying:

We fritter away our lives hustling between committee hearings, filing bills to keep our names in the paper. We have some fundamental choices to make. Do we believe in a growth society? And, if so, how do we reconcile it with environmental concerns? Are we willing to fight for anything? And, if so, where fundamentally? Do we want to continue to run trade deficits? If not, are we willing to adopt policies necessary to change the present decline? Unless we are willing to raise these questions and do something about them, then we will witness the decline and fall of our nation.

The other Republican senator was Jack Danforth of Missouri. Cohen had taken notes during a conversation with Danforth on March 21, 1979, when Jimmy Carter was president. It happened that Danforth was sitting next to Cohen at the Oklahoma forum. After joking that he would be more careful talking around Cohen, Danforth said:

The question isn’t what we’re going to do. The question is what the American people are going to do. What has happened in American politics in the recent years is that each of the two political parties has appealed to the

base of the party, the true believers of the party. And the result of that is that instead of the two parties appealing to the center of the political spectrum and competing for the center, which traditionally they did, now each party is trying to energize the base. And the people in the center, which is most Americans, have become marginalized by the current state of partisan politics in America.

Some call that gridlock. The mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, an independent now, after being a Democrat and then a Republican, called it “paralysis.” At another conference, “Ceasefire! Bridging the Political Divide,” sponsored by the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, Bloomberg said:

America, the most wonderful country in the world, I think, is at a crossroads. The politics of partisanship and the resulting inaction have paralyzed decision-making, primarily at the federal level, and the big issues of the day are not being addressed, leaving our future in real jeopardy....No matter who is in charge, sadly, today partisanship is king. It has become a contest in Washington to one-up the other side and to score points for the next election. Decisions in Washington these days are more political and less issue-based than I think they ever have been before, and the consequences have been disastrous for us.

It is, however, a selected and complicated case of paralysis. Some of the patient’s limbs (or branches) move when they choose to move. The particular Washington paralysis seems to produce governance unable to move on major problems concerning, say, health care or energy or taxation—because partisans at the ideological extremes of each party prefer paralysis to movement—but capable at the same time of going to war twice in recent years without the constitutional permission of Congress. In such cases, modern Congresses have simply allowed

the executive branch to do what it pleased or do whatever it could get away with—and it has been able to get away with a great deal because members of Congress fear much more being punished by voters for taking a stand. Paralysis has its purposes and its rewards.

The purpose, in the words of the editor of *Newsweek International*, Fareed Zakaria, is quite simple:

In most of these areas [of governance] the solution involves some short-term pain in exchange for long-term gain. But Washington has become incapable of that. Passing a pork-laden bill takes no time. Trimming subsidies, raising taxes or making strategic investments are near impossible....Compromise is hard. No one gets all or even most of what they want. But in a vast, continental land of 300 million, people are going to disagree. No compromise means nothing will get done. And America will slowly drift down in the roll of nations.

Interestingly, politicians on the state and local levels, like Mayor Bloomberg, tend to see hyperpartisanship as more a Washington phenomenon. State and local government is simply more bipartisan (or nonpartisan). One reason for that is that almost all states and localities are required by law to produce balanced budgets, which produces documents and debates that are more transparent to the press and to taxpayers. In a phrase, state and local officials have no place to hide. But federal governance, with its hidden appropriations and deficit-financing affects a governor or mayor as it does any other American. At the USC Annenberg conference, the mayor of the country’s largest city said:

Partisanship may be king in Washington, but the rest of us don’t have to pay tribute....They’ve become hooked on partisanship, because it offers easy answers, and then it consumes them....The data is manipulated to justify ideological positions.

They are hurting our economic competitiveness, driving scientific and medical discoveries overseas and jeopardizing our future as the land of hope and opportunity... Push all the big, long-term problems into future generations: healthcare, Social Security, budget deficits, global warming, immigration, you name it.

He named it and the governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, picked up on it that day, saying:

Look at immigration reform, for instance. The debate in Washington is broken down once again. It's a classic example of an issue that Republicans and Democrats must work on together in order to fix the problem, but they seem to fail each time. One side says, "Send all the illegals back where they came from and build a big fence." And the other side says, "Forget about it, give everyone amnesty."

Well, hey, I have an idea. How about being realistic? There's a totally reasonable, centrist approach to the issue, and this is it: Secure our borders, while at the same time recognizing the economic and social reality by providing a guest worker program and a path to citizenship for those already here and who meet certain criteria, like paying a fine for coming here illegally, learning the English language and becoming a law-abiding citizen.... There is a mainstream solution and it is time we introduce the concept of the mainstream back into American political life.

With that, Schwarzenegger introduced his chief of staff, Susan Kennedy, a liberal Democrat.

The governor of Kansas, Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat, then was asked whether she had Republicans in her cabinet. She said she doesn't ask. But the answer is yes, she has appointed Republicans. Speaking of Washington, she said:

I think there's a win/loss column in Washington where if our party moves ahead, your party has to move behind. We're punishing people back and forth. We're locking people out of meeting rooms. I mean that doesn't happen often in a city council room or in a state house, or if it does happen, people say, "That's unacceptable." You know, we're not going to let that happen anymore.

Then she talked of hide-and-seek budgeting:

In Washington, you can cover a lot of this up. You can cover up a lot easier because you don't always have to present fair budgets or talk honestly about what the budget is, you don't have to talk honestly about the fact that we have shortchanged the veterans in this country.

At the Oklahoma forum, a former independent governor of Maine, Angus King, saw Washington doing little more than damage control:

It's a slow-motion catastrophe. We don't have troops pouring across our neighbors' borders. But we are facing a kind of slow-motion challenge that, if we don't address, our children and grandchildren are going to look at us and say, "What in the hell were you doing when this country went down?"

William Cohen added:

We've got to pay our bills. We can't continue to borrow from our children. We are bankrupting them. We're engaged in fiscal child abuse. It used to be that our parents borrowed so that we would have a better future. And what we are doing today is we are borrowing from our kids so we can enjoy creature comforts today. That is not a moral standard that any of us can be proud of.

What Robert Merry said about the cyclical nature of partisanship has certainly been true in modern times as laws of physics. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, but the catch is no one knows the timing of the counter-force. The House of Representatives has more often than not been the most volatile of the branches of government because members must run for re-election every two years. The permanent campaign is nothing new on the south side of the Capitol, but many of the issues that arise regularly (and cyclically) in the House are often mirrored in both the Senate and in the White House and its relations with both Congress and the nation itself. Since the last years of the 19th century, partisanship has revolved around a series of recurring issues focused on the power of the Speaker: the House rules he or she is able to impose on members, particularly opposition members, seniority and the age of members. Under the durable American two-party system, all of those issues (or problems) are played out in the orbits of partisanship, nonpartisanship or bipartisanship.

There are also a couple of outside issues that need to be considered, one old and one new. The first is the drawing of House districts by the states, districts usually designed to protect incumbents and give the great majority of them easy re-election races; the second, which affects the Senate as well, is the impact of transportation and communication technologies, which allow members to go to, or to work in, their home districts on a regular (and grueling) basis, often allowing them to spend more time with constituents and family—and less time getting to know each other and national issues.

The simplest view of the way the House and Senate can work was articulated by Thomas Brackett Reed, Republican of Maine—Czar Reed—who served six years as speaker in the 1890s: “The best system is to have one party govern and the other party watch.”

There’s the rub. And, though the language of politics has become a bit more restrained, the same idea has been implemented, with varying degrees of success, by succeeding speakers, Democrats and Republicans, by Joseph Cannon of Illinois in the first decade of the 20th century, and then more recently by Sam Rayburn of

Texas, Thomas “Tip” O’Neill of Massachusetts, Jim Wright of Texas, Newt Gingrich of Georgia, Dennis Hastert of Illinois and Nancy Pelosi of California.

Cannon was a Republican who also made himself chairman of the Rules Committee. “The all-powerful Rules Committee”, as it has often been referred to over the years, is basically the leadership tool used to determine which legislation comes to the House floor for debate and voting. Reed’s powers, which included naming all committee chairmen and deciding which members would sit on each committee, were curtailed in the “Revolution of 1910,” led by Democrats and some dissatisfied Republicans. Cannon’s fall was instructive. Fed up with his heavy-handed rule, members organized around reform. These reformers adopted (or returned to) the seniority system. Chairmen and ranking members of each party would be appointed based only on how long they had served in the Congress and how long they had served on the committee in question. Then, after 1960, most “reforms” were attempts to overthrow strict seniority as the basis for power in the House.

At the beginning of the 1960s, a new young president, John F. Kennedy, and younger members of Congress attacked the seniority system, partially because of their own ambitions but, more substantially, because old, white Southern Democrats were using their control of committees to prevent the passage of civil rights legislation in both the House and the Senate. Most of the reform effort was directed at House chairmen and senior members, some of whom were stripped of their seniority after hearings about their personal behavior or because they had supported Republican candidates for president. The reforms in both houses were an important factor in the passage of civil rights legislation. The old Southern chairmen passed on or were passed over under President Kennedy and then President Lyndon Johnson.

But the ultimate attack on seniority came in the House in the 1970s, when younger members in both parties pushed for rules that ended automatic applications of seniority. The cycle changed: The selection of chairmen and ranking minority members would now include secret ballots in party caucuses. “Caucus control” was

the new reform and its most important effect was to give more powers to the majority party and to the speaker chosen by the party caucus. When Newt Gingrich became speaker after Republican congressional victories in 1994, he consolidated the new reforms by persuading (and bullying a bit) his colleagues to introduce tenure in committees; a chairman could serve only three two-year terms. The new speaker, only 49 years old, believed that the Republican House now had the tools and the determination to directly and consistently challenge the policy and political agenda of a Democratic president, Bill Clinton.

If there is such a thing as hyperpartisanship, it peaked in the impeachment of Clinton for his personal behavior in a relationship with a young White House intern. The House impeached Clinton on December 19, 1998, and he was then acquitted by the Senate on February 12, 1999.

Partisanship was the rule, and it has stayed the rule. A new Republican speaker, Dennis Hastert of Illinois, unwittingly paraphrased Czar Reed when he continued to operate through the party caucus system and said that the House should be ruled by “the majority of the majority.” Party policy was decided in private by the majority of the majority party and the minority party was reduced to watching it happen.

Most importantly, Democrats were often not allowed to participate in House-Senate conferences to resolve differences in legislation passed by the two houses. That is an enormous power and can be enormously abused, as conferees write in provisions that may never have been voted on in either body or eliminate provisions passed by both.

The distortions of caucus government were emphasized by David Boren, son and father of House members and himself governor of Oklahoma and a United States senator before becoming president of the University of Oklahoma. Speaking at the “Bipartisan Forum” at his school, he said:

Many years ago the party caucuses used to meet, all the Democrats and all the Republicans in the Senate, for example, once a year, maybe twice a year. Now they meet every single week without

fail. They gather really to figure out how to score points on the other party. There is no competing institution. There is no bipartisan caucus. There is no place for every week in an orderly way we always meet together to look and to work for bipartisan solutions... That’s not happening now. We don’t have any offsetting bipartisan institutions to offset these extremely partisan institutions, which are really focused more narrowly. So that’s part of what’s happening.

Not surprisingly, a powerful desire (or nostalgia) for bipartisanship or nonpartisanship has taken hold in Washington—to say nothing of the rest of the country, where the arcane rules that govern life in the capital city are little understood and hugely resented—after at least two decades of this kind of fierce partisanship.

In Zakaria’s essay, he wrote:

During the 1980s, the United States tackled many of the problems it faced through bipartisan compromises. The government passed a massive tax reform, with Ronald Reagan and Democrat [House Ways and Means chairman] Dan Rostenkowski championing the bill. It revamped Social Security and passed immigration reform as well as a series of trade deals—all with strong bipartisan support. These policies were crucial in setting the stage for two decades of strong economic growth....The contrast with today is stark. Now Washington can argue about everything and solve nothing. A can-do country has been saddled with a do-nothing political system.

He then quotes David Gergen, who has served in both Republican and Democratic White Houses, from Richard Nixon’s to Bill Clinton’s: “With the end of the Cold War, we saw a new, destructive kind of partisanship. And for much of the past decade, we’ve kicked the can down the road on our big problems.”

Some of this is because of the narrowcasting of American politics, a process in which the

extreme ends of the spectrum have been magnified and the center gets diminished. Part of it, Gergen argues, is generational. “I have a distinct memory that the World War II generation really put country ahead of party. That is simply not the case with the generation in power right now.”

Gergen’s comment underlines both the cyclical and the generational nature of America’s periods of bipartisanship. For a long time after World War II, most of the presidents and most of the members of Congress had served in the armed forces. Their generation—“the Greatest Generation” as NBC News’ Tom Brokaw called it—were bonded by shared experience that transcended politics. Both the war and the Great Depression of the 1930s brought the country and its people together (even if almost all the veterans and the politicians were male), and that bonding inevitably created a political class that saw issues greater than the future of their own parties. The Cold War and the enduring sense of nuclear threat did much the same.

When Zakaria mentioned the 1980s, I remembered lecturing in those days at “Science Po”—the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris—when almost invariably the first question would be, “In the United States, how do you tell the difference between Republicans and Democrats?” To French students, used to a politics that ranged from monarchism to nihilism, all American politicians sounded alike. That was not without reason: The nation was kept focused on the Cold War by a political class whose differences, at least on national security, were quite small. I would sometimes say, in those Paris classes, that if you put the leading American conservative and liberal politicians on a stage, say Ronald Reagan and Edward Kennedy, and asked them 100 fundamental questions about the role and practice of government and politics, they would agree on more than 90 of the answers—partly because they basically agreed about the threat totalitarian communism posed to liberal capitalism and democracy.

That is no longer true, at least for now. Vice President Dick Cheney, for instance, and Sen. Barack Obama simply do not agree on the role of government in the United States or the role of the United States in the world.

There is no doubt that there now are great generational divides on questions of partisanship in Washington. In a June 19, 2008, column titled, “Best Friends a New President Can Have,” the *Washington Post’s* David Broder lamented the rise of partisanship by focusing on some of the bipartisan partnerships he feels have greatly benefited the country since the end of the Cold War, writing:

I spent two hours in separate but parallel interviews with the Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Joseph Biden of Delaware, and the ranking Republican on that panel, Richard Lugar of Indiana.

Despite all the static in the political atmosphere, Biden and Lugar left me believing that there is hope of overcoming the divisive legacy of the past six years—in large part because of the work these two have done together to prepare the way...They have established a code of comfortable collaboration that has pervaded the entire panel. Both these men are dead-serious students of international affairs. They travel the world and read and consult widely. There is a deep mutual respect; I lost count of the number of times Biden quoted Lugar, and vice versa, during our conversations.

They are not unique. There are deep friendships and cordial working relationships on a few other Senate committees, including Armed Services, where Democrat Carl Levin of Michigan and Republican John Warner of Virginia enjoy a similar bond.

All of that is true. And there are many examples of serious men and women from different parties working on serious issues. Democrat Herbert Kohl of Wisconsin and Republican Charles Grassley of Iowa worked together month after month last year to find ways to improve federal oversight of nursing homes,

but have not yet been able to write legislation acceptable to their colleagues in either party.

But what is now seen by many as commendable was seen years ago as reactionary cronyism holding back progress when experience, cooperation and dialogue were all part of the dreaded seniority system. The fact is that Biden at 65 is the youngest of the four men. Warner is 81, Lugar 76 and Levin 74. They have served a total of 125 years in the Senate. Broder, as respected as the men he wrote about, is 78 years old.

Another don of the Senate – 78-year-old Arlen Specter, a Republican who has served 28 years – was quoted by columnist Robert Novak, who is 77, as saying:

The American people live under the illusion that we have a United States Senate. The facts show that the Senate is realistically dysfunctional. It is on life support, perhaps even moribund. The only facet of Senate bipartisanship is the conspiracy of successive Republican and Democratic leaders to employ procedural device[s] ... incomprehensible to outsiders.

Indeed it is. What Specter was complaining about on June 9, 2008, during a speech with only one other senator in attendance—freshman Sen. Ben Cardin, a Maryland Democrat assigned to preside over an empty chamber—was the use of a device called “filling the tree” by the Democratic leader, Harry Reid of Nevada. It was the 12th time Reid had used the arcane parliamentary device, presenting an energy bill filled with interlocking amendments that prevented other amendments being offered by the minority Republicans. The idea, Specter complained, was one of the tricks that leaders have used to make the Senate more like the House, creating “majority of the majority” rule. Reid’s tactic worked in sidelining the Republicans, but it also guaranteed that there would be no legislation passed.

Dysfunctional may be too strong a word to describe the paralyzed Senate. The “World’s greatest deliberative body,” as it used to be called, simply has not changed to accommodate new technologies and new generations of senators. In

a recent article, *Newsweek* described the life and lifestyle of one young senator:

He became a part-time bachelor. He lived three or four days a week in a one-bedroom apartment a few blocks from the Capitol. He worked all day, and at night he missed his daughters and his wife left behind....The separated life was of their own making. When they had first pondered a run for the Senate, the couple had weighed the pros and cons of relocating to Washington—and decided against it as many do now. The wife (or husband) has a career back home. The children resist being uprooted. And then there are the finances.

But while frequent-flier legislators have been a boon for constituent services, they aren’t necessarily good for governance. Old-guard senators bemoan their new colleagues’ eagerness to get out of town on Thursday nights, a tendency that the veterans believe has helped make Washington a more partisan place. It was easier to understand the gentleman from the other party, they reason, when you saw him cheering at St. Albans’ soccer games....[This] generation of senators face a broader dilemma: How do they work with their opponents when, for so long, they’ve lived their lives apart?

The young senator described by *Newsweek*’s Jonathan Darman was Barack Obama of Illinois, whose wife and children continue to live in Chicago.

The men and women, now that there are some, live different kinds of lives. As Darman pointed out, in what was once considered “The Club,” the new members now hardly know each other. Sen. Warner, who has seen it all in six terms, said: “I remember in the good old days, there were several senators who were known to keep a pretty good bar. We would just go down and have a sip together and go home. The fight was over.” Even leaders who clashed hard and often in public understood the old rules: Both

President Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill would talk about their arguments ending at 6 o'clock when it was time for a drink and a couple of jokes. No more.

Obama is sometimes compared with John F. Kennedy, but their lives as senators could hardly be more different. Kennedy lived on N Street in Georgetown and walked or drove to work with other members of Congress or reporters who lived in the neighborhood. Some of his best friends (and mentors) were journalists and Republicans in the House and Senate. He was a regular at the cocktail receptions and dinner parties that preoccupied official Washington in those days. When it came time to govern, to be president, some of those reporters served as White House staffers and Republicans ended up in JFK's cabinet.

To some, new communication and data technology is part of the problem rather than the solution. The expansion of polling and other survey research has changed the way politicians think, speak and act. The 24-hour news cycle often determines when national politicians must speak and what they choose to say. But both Broder, the journalist, and Chuck Robb, who represented Virginia in the Senate from 1989 to 2001, emphasized the great change in Congress, particularly in the House, wrought by faster and more powerful computers. Both suggested what amounts to conspiracy between the parties—most election laws and all congressional districts are created by state legislatures and by state parties—to preserve each other and to protect incumbents. And computers have made that campaign conspiracy more sophisticated than ever before. High-tech gerrymandering is a new and very powerful political tool.

“With computer technology, [politicians'] ability to design districts that meet the legal requirement for equal population while guaranteeing their fellow partisans easy passage into office has never been greater,” said Broder. He continued:

In 2002 and 2006, the most recent off-year elections, about nine out of 10 congressional districts were won by more than 10 percentage points—a clear sign that the game had been

rigged when the lines were drawn in the state legislatures. In the first of those years, only eight incumbents lost; in the second, only 21.

As scholars have pointed out, the scarcity of real competition in nearly all districts has many consequences—all of them bad. It makes legislators less responsive to public opinion, since they are in effect safe from challenge in November. It shifts the competition from the general election to the primary, where candidates of more extreme views can hope to attract support from passionately ideological voters and exploit the low turnouts typical of those primaries.

Robb made some of the same points:

I don't want to blame the computer entirely, but in providing the ability to micromanage the redistricting, we have enabled both parties to create districts which consisted of people that already agreed with them. So you didn't have to reach across the aisle. You concentrate, going back to your base again.

The permanent campaign is also something of a byproduct of technological progress, beginning with cross-country jet airliners. In the good old days, only members of Congress whose districts were within a few hundred miles of Washington were expected to return home for that big Rotary Club dinner or a fundraising party on the right side of town. Now even members from the West Coast are expected to make an appearance most any time between Thursday dinners and Monday lunches. They like to call it “listening to the people,” though sometimes it seems more like campaign sleepwalking—and it has almost nothing to do with governing.

In their study of permanent campaigning, Ornstein and Mann, who edited the work of a

team of scholars, concluded:¹

For most of American history, campaigns generally were confined to the latter half of election years, and when the campaign ended, the governing began—after a lengthy transition interval of more than four months. Political actors accepted as a matter of course that once the campaigns were over, erstwhile adversaries would often become allies. With rare exceptions, campaign bitterness was generally confined to one's opponent, not directed at all members of his or her party. The day after the election, campaign materials were put away, as Christmas lights are boxed and returned to the attic....

Most important, campaigning has become increasingly antithetical to governing. Candidates decreasingly use campaigns to build public support for governing decisions or to forge public consensus before making policy and decreasingly look for ways to insulate controversial or difficult policy decisions from the vulnerability of campaigns to demagoguery and oversimplification. Legislative leaders no longer apply rules or norms to make votes and policy decisions less open to campaign manipulation. Instead, parties and individual officeholders have fallen into patterns where they routinely manipulate the policy process to gain tactical advantage in the next election. Candidates often frame campaign themes and take positions in ways that frustrate rather than facilitate the task of governing after the election.

However much politics has changed during the 2008 campaigns for the Democratic and Republican presidential nominations, the changes in the media have been greater, more complex, more confusing. An example: On the last Sunday in June 2008, the two newspapers that have dominated American political coverage for at least 40 years, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, published long front-page stories trying to figure out and explain where the news of the day was coming from these days—or hours, or minutes, or seconds, or nanoseconds.

Under the headline “Political Freelancers Use Web to Join the Attack,” Jim Rutenberg of *The New York Times* was reporting from Culver City, Calif., tracing the origins of anti-McCain and anti-Obama video ads running not on television, but on YouTube and other websites. The trail took him from Culver City to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and Durham, North Carolina, before writing:

In the 2008 race, the most attention-grabbing attacks are increasingly coming from people outside the political world. In some cases they are amateurs operating with nothing but passion, a computer and a YouTube account, in other cases sophisticated media types with more elaborate resources but no campaign experience.

Then he quoted an Obama “strategist” named Dan Carol: “It’s politics at the speed of Internet. There’s just a lot of people who at a very low cost can do this stuff and don’t need a memo from HQ.”

“An Attack That Came Out of the Ether” was the *Washington Post* headline over a story about a researcher at the Institute for Advanced Study—that’s where Albert Einstein used to work—trying to discover who was originally behind chain e-mails, received by millions of people, stating (falsely) that Obama was a Muslim—in one case calling the Illinois senator, a Christian, an “Islamic Manchurian Candidate.” Dr. Danielle Allen got close, tracking down e-mailers in Massachusetts, Illinois, North Carolina, California and Hawaii spreading the

1 “The Permanent Campaign and Its Future” edited by Norman Ornstein and Thomas A. Mann. The other scholars whose work was used in the book are Hugh Heclo, Stephen Hess, Karlyn Bowman, Anthony Corrado, Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, David Brady and Morris Fiorina, Burdett A. Loomis and Charles O. Jones.

false message, but could not find out who actually originated it.

Not that it mattered. Whatever she learned, it was too late. The message was already out there at morph speed. It is impossible to calculate the effect of a rumor or lie on digital wings. Whether or not there was any cause and effect, national polls indicated that the number of people who said they believed Obama was a Muslim had almost doubled to 13 percent of respondents after the e-mail tsunami.

"It's all about speed," said Susan Kennedy, Schwarzenegger's chief of staff, at the 2007 USC Annenberg conference. "Yes, I think there's definitely a qualitative difference. You don't have the same responsibility in terms of sources [on blogs] in terms of verifying information."

Does that matter? The governor of Arizona, Janet Napolitano, who was at the same conference, answered:

When I go to work in the morning and I've had a bad article in the print press, and I'll say "Oh, they're banging on me, blah, blah, blah." And my staff will just look at me and say, "Nobody reads the papers." ...In Arizona and in most states, television news doesn't have the capacity to cover most state politics, a sound bite here or there, a campaign event here or there, but that's about it. Radio. The Internet is huge, and probably, last and not least, is the traditional print press.

The moderator, Juan Williams of National Public Radio, then asked: "Why is the coverage so driven by partisanship?"

Jay Carney, the Washington bureau chief of *Time* magazine, countered: "I think the coverage is a reflection of the partisanship. It doesn't drive the partisanship..."

"Right," said John Podesta, who was chief of staff in the Clinton White House and currently is president of the Center for American Progress. "It's a media structure that looks more like the beginning of the country than it does like the 1950s."

Susan Kennedy agreed, citing the first great American partisan election. "The role of the media hasn't changed since Thomas Jefferson

and John Adams went at it in 1800."

It's the speed, stupid?

Yes and no. University of Oklahoma president David Boren argued that it's also the questions: "This is really an appeal to the media. [You] must ask the candidates very specific and detailed questions and not let them get by saying, 'Oh, yes, I'm for bipartisanship.' We really don't expect very many people to come out against that."

Then the former governor and senator listed the questions he thought were necessary:

Will you appoint a truly bipartisan cabinet, qualified people without regard to party? Not just a token or two, but people in the really key positions who represent different points of view and different political parties. Will you really do that? Will you set up working groups? And will the president of the United States sit with the congressional leaders of both parties and members of his own cabinet and all of them join together to work on these important issues like national security?

The question of questions was also the subject of a paper put together by David Gergen and Andy Zelleke, who are co-directors of the Center for Public Leadership at the Kennedy School at Harvard University. Polling 200 leaders from many fields, they came up with 15 questions they believed would do a better job of demonstrating what a candidate would actually do as president. Those questions included:

- "What are your five core values and how do they shape how you lead?"
- "Tell us about a high-performing team that you've built. What made it high-performing?"
- "Please share some examples of your willingness to be decisive. Can you tell us about a time when a lack of decisiveness got you in trouble?"
- "Can you give us an example of how you have overcome resistance to bring

about a needed change?”²

The questions asked by reporters and citizens during the numerous debates among candidates of both parties during the 2008 primary campaigns were of a different order than those asked in previous years, according to a study done for this paper by the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. There were a total of 522 questions asked during the Democratic debates and 502 during the Republican debates. Taking into account that the categorizing of the questions is a subjective exercise, the questions were first divided into three categories:

- I. Direct substantive questions: Policies and opinions about issues.
- II. Political questions: Comparisons and criticisms; What if...?; Candidates' past actions and positions.
- III. Other: A wide range of personal questions that could be described as covering character, campaign tactics and the horse race; “Gotcha!”; guilt by association; party positions, promises.

Here are some examples of those questions by categories:

I. Policies and opinions

- “My question is, if you were president, what would be your strategy for ending the war in Iraq?”
- “When you look at President Putin, what do you see?”

II. Comparisons and criticisms

- “Is Hillary Clinton fit to be commander in chief?”

- “If you were president of the United States and if the intelligence community said to you, ‘We know where Osama bin Laden is. He’s in Pakistan. We’ve got the specific target. But he’s only going to be there 20 minutes,’ you’ve got to give the order yes or no to take him out with a Hellfire missile, but it’s going to kill some innocent civilians at the same time. What would you do?”
- “Your critics have called you ‘flip-flop Mitt’ for, among other things, your decision to take the ‘no new taxes’ pledge this year after refusing to do so in 2002. Tell me why your decision to take the pledge shouldn’t be seen as a blatant appeal to the party base?”
- “Sen. Obama, you have called this war in Iraq, ‘dumb.’ How do you square that position with those who have sacrificed so much? And why have you voted for appropriations for it in the past?”

III. The campaign, guilt by association and the party

- “The Associated Press this week wrote an article. They talked to 40 Democratic activists and officeholders across the country: ‘Democrats worry Clinton may weigh down lesser candidates’; Democrats think Clinton may hurt the rest of the ticket.’ Are they right to be worried?”
- “Sen. Clinton, one of your pollsters was quoted in *The New Yorker* magazine as saying, ‘The Hispanic voter has not shown a lot of willingness or affinity to support the black candidate. Does that represent your view of the campaign?’”

² The complete set of questions can be read at www.HowYouLead.org.

- “For the sake of the party, should Sen. Larry Craig resign immediately?”

In the Democratic debates, 162 questions, or 31 percent, we categorized as policy questions and another 147, or 28.2 percent, we called opinion questions. In the Republican debates, we counted 165 Policy questions, or 31.6 percent of the total. Another 159 questions, or 30.5 percent, were categorized as opinion questions. In other words, although some of those questions were worded in terms designed to provoke controversy, about 60 percent of the questions asked were in Category I and could be considered solid and serious attempts to elicit information about what kind of president a candidate might be. (That is said in the historical context that few campaigns have actually or accurately forecast the tenor of a presidency.)

Category II questions, generally serious questions, even if seemingly aimed to provoke controversy, accounted for 13.1 percent of Democratic questions and 11.4 percent of Republican questions.

Category III questions, generally looking for trouble, accounted for 27.9 percent of Democratic questions and 22.5 percent of Republican questions.

We also added a final, separate, category: wording included in other questions that demanded a promise by the candidate. In some ways those were the most dangerous of the questions, especially for the candidates, who one day would again be called on what they “promised” during the campaign. An example, from the “policies” category: “Would you pledge to the American people that Iran will not develop a nuclear bomb while you are president?” That category added up to an extra 6 percent of Democratic questions and 3.1 percent of Republican questions.

An interesting comparison can be made between those numbers. Using the same categories to classify questions asked of candidates in 1980 and 1976, a somewhat different pattern emerges. In the 1980 debates between President Jimmy Carter and Gov. Ronald Reagan, 21 questions were asked, 20 of which would have been classed in this paper as Category I, substantive policy

questions. In the 1976 debates between President Gerald Ford and former Gov. Jimmy Carter, 53 questions were asked, 47 of which would be characterized here as category I, substantive policy questions.

(In the 1960 debates between Vice President Richard Nixon and Sen. John F. Kennedy, 43 questions were asked, 29 of which would be considered here as Category I questions.)

There is no doubt that the kind and tone of questioning in television debates has changed over the decades—and the questions themselves must be considered less substantive. But that is only part of the story of modern campaigning. Perhaps more important than the questions and answers themselves is *which* answers are selected to be shown on news programs, both network and cable. It is one thing for a conscientious debate watcher to hear a question and answer once, quite another to hear a soundbite answer, usually angry or embarrassing, time and again on replays across their television dial.³

The Oklahoma panel, which included eight former and sitting senators and three former governors, actually produced a joint statement, read by former Sen. Sam Nunn of Georgia, that went a bit beyond Boren’s appeals to journalists. It included these points:

In order to break this partisan impasse, we urge the presidential candidates to provide:

Clear descriptions of how they would establish a government of national unity; specific strategies for reducing polarization and reaching bipartisan consensus; plans to go beyond tokenism to appoint a truly bipartisan cabinet with critical posts held by the most qualified people regardless of their political affiliation; and proposals for bipartisan executive and legislative policy groups in absolutely critical areas such as national security.

³ The debate research for this section was done by Megan Baaske, a junior fellow for the Center on Communication Leadership at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California.

Nunn also added a sort of postscript to that declaration. Reporting on conversations he had with former Florida governor and senator Bob Graham when they were flying together to Oklahoma:

Bob Graham had a great idea he discussed on the plane coming out: Really challenge the universities all over the country to really start having these kind of forums, pick out the seven or eight critical issues and start talking about them outside the strictly political debate.

Boren closed on a somewhat hopeful, if familiar, note:

History teaches us that bipartisanship is possible. It is not some romantic dream. It has a proven track record in our own political system producing landmarks as the Marshall Plan, NATO and the policy of containment of communism, which was sustained for more than 40 years through administrations of both political parties and through Congresses dominated by different political parties.

Bipartisanship (or nonpartisanship) is not so wild a dream. Boren's little history lesson also raises two other optimistic points: The nation and the men and women who govern have much more often than not pulled together in crisis; and it is possible for men of ideology to push, promote and effect their ideas using bipartisanship as a tool rather than seeing it as a hurdle to be avoided.

A recent book by Ronald Brownstein, *The Second Civil War: How Extreme Partisanship Has Paralyzed Washington and Polarized America*, provides a valuable history of recent political partisanship. It attempts to chronicle 20th-century congressional politics as four separate phases:

1. 1896 to 1938, as a period of highly partisan strategies by both parties;
2. The 1930s to the early 1960s as a period of relative bipartisanship,

perhaps forced or forged by great challenges, the Depression, World War II and the Cold War;

3. The 1960s to 1990s as period of transition to more partisan politics;
4. The 1990s and early years of the 21st century as a period of what he calls "hyperpartisanship."

His most persuasive witness for that thesis is Richard Gephardt, the Missouri congressman who served as the Democratic leader of the House and, after 28 years, said in 1994:

There is no dialogue between the parties. You are either on the blue team or the red team, and you never wander off. It's like the British Parliament. And I never thought about it that much when I came, but it was very different then. It wasn't a parliamentary system, and people wandered off their side and voted in committee or on the floor with the other side. There was this understanding that we were there to solve problems.

In reviewing Ronald Brownstein's book for *The New York Times Book Review*, Alan Brinkley, a Columbia University historian, wrote that partisanship and compromise are not necessarily always at odds:

Ronald Reagan, the great hero of the right and a much more effective spokesman for its views than President Bush, certainly oversaw a significant shift in the ideology and policy of the Republican Party. But through much of his presidency, both he and the congressional Republicans displayed considerable pragmatism, engaged in negotiation with their opponents and accepted many compromises. Bill Clinton, bedeviled though he was by partisan fury, was a master of compromise and negotiation—and of co-opting and transforming the views of his adversaries. Only under George

W. Bush—through a combination of his control of both houses of Congress, his own inflexibility and the post-9/11 climate—did extreme partisanship manage to dominate the agenda. Given the apparent failure of this project, it seems unlikely that a new president, whether Democrat or Republican, will be able to re-create the dispiriting political world of the last seven years.

Brinkley, like many other observers of recent events, was struck by what many in the future are likely to interpret as the willful destruction of national (and international) consensus by the Bush administration after the tragedy of the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Instead, the administration used tragedy and fear to push an in-place ideology that included preemptive military intervention in the Middle East and an attempt to remake the military services, law enforcement and the judiciary into agents of that ideology, rashly cutting out the “loyal opposition” and questioning its very loyalty to the country itself. The results, predictably, polarized the nation instead of uniting it—or so history will probably judge.

The historian and others, correctly I think, were arguing that Reagan, a far more ideological president than Bush, was also far more effective in weaving that ideology into the fabric of public opinion and governance not because he was partisan, which he was, but because he understood the power and uses of bipartisanship in governing and nonpartisanship in rhetorically defining American values and goals. Reagan was not an energetic president—he was a believer in Calvin Coolidge’s idea that the first rule of being president is not to do anything others can do for you—but he used that energy in wise and productive ways. (I would, and have, argued that you do not have to share Reagan’s ideology to understand his effectiveness.) He may have worked 9-to-5 days, but the first few hours of most of them were spent on the telephone talking to members of Congress, most of them Democrats he was trying to persuade to vote with Republicans on a range of legislation he favored—multiplying the powers of the

White House rather than isolating them. He worked from a pile of green sheets put on his desk overnight, papers that briefly summed up a legislator’s life and ideas, along with such details as the state of his marriage and the health of his children—personal subjects Reagan mixed with his political pitch. If he was successful in his bipartisan pitch, Reagan would write “Mission accomplished” at the bottom of his green sheet.

The ultimate Reagan pitch, which echoed John Warner’s comments about not running down or campaigning against colleagues, was that he would not campaign in a Democrat’s district if that Democrat would join him in compromise on one bill or appointment or another. Reagan was, in a campaign phrase George W. Bush thought was just words, “a uniter, not a divider.”

There really is something called the national interest, and there have always been politicians, no matter how hard-edged, who sometimes bend to it at the cost of their own ideas and even their own ambition. To use two Republican examples:

President Eisenhower did not broadcast his own true thoughts on race in America and civil rights in 1954 after the United States Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. If he had, the nation would be in a lot worse shape today than it is. He grinned and bore it, because he knew the difference between a uniter and a divider. His vice president, Richard Nixon, for whatever reason, and his reasons were often dark and always complex, chose not to contest the results of the 1960 presidential election, even though there seemed to be enough evidence of election fraud to produce a slim chance that he could have, in court and in the court of public opinion, changed the numbers—or at least weakened the president-elect, John F. Kennedy, by questioning the legitimacy of the election itself. Whatever the reason, he chose not to do that—and to spare the nation a bitter debate on the legitimacy of the presidency itself.

My own feeling is that only a strong president with a mandate or governing through a universal crisis—a necessary war or devastating climate change—can bring any bipartisanship or, better, nonpartisanship to Washington. Their first and perhaps their biggest chance will

come with the selection of their running mates. It is indicative of the rising power of the idea of bipartisanship that both of the candidates have been reported to consider vice presidential candidates who are from the other party. That may not happen, but the fact that it has been talked about is one indication of how worried many people are about the direction of American political dialogue.

And Barack Obama and John McCain both have the potential to come back to Washington January 20 with something close to a mandate. There have been a series of commentaries, most notably by Andrew Sullivan and Bruce Bartlett on Obama's appeal to libertarian conservatives. McCain has been branded "a maverick" so often—usually because he sometimes seems to talk faster than he thinks—that he and significant numbers of Democrats have come to believe that, despite his age and Washington experience, he does represent change from the Republicans now in the White House. Though Obama rejected it, McCain's offer of traveling together to joint town meetings around the country is hard to argue against. Why not? At any rate, both men seem positioned to say something Americans seem ready to hear:

"I intend to be the president of all the people, including, most especially, the ones who voted against me."

Another Republican called a maverick, Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, put a "Memo to the Candidates" on his website. That move may be a bit pretentious, but he begins with a valid appeal to their pretensions: "[You] will be forever linked together. The next four months will define how [you] are remembered."

Then he writes:

Americans are in a serious mood to change the direction of their country... [There is] a sense that we are on the backside of history... McCain and Obama are both smart, capable and decent men who love their country. Presidential campaigns are tough and there should be vigorous debate which produces political tension. But these two candidates must not allow this reality to control the process ... thereby

obfuscating the serious discussion of serious and specific issues so critical to the future of America and the world... One of these candidates is going to have to bring this country together, make the Congress a partner, form a broad consensus to govern, and help lead the world. If they so polarize and divide our country during the campaign, they will find it difficult to govern... Sens. McCain and Obama must conduct their campaigns with the recognition that their ability to lead is being shaped each day of their campaigns.

It's not rocket science or physics. It's politics. These people are professionals. They know what they are doing, the good and the nasty and the dangerous. Our job is to bring out the best in them, as their jobs are to bring out the best in all of us.

Michael Bloomberg had the last word at the USC Annenberg conference:

The bottom line is this country is the most wonderful country that anybody has ever created. We have done some amazing things in the last 235 years domestically and to help the rest of the world. And somehow or other, we seemed to have lost our vision.

We've become afraid. And there's no reason for America to be afraid. We are a country of optimists. We believe we can do everything. And we want to get back to that.

July 2008



NOTES

“Ceasefire! Bridging the Political Divide”

USC Annenberg
School for Communication
June 18–19, 2007

University of Oklahoma
Bipartisan Forum
January 2, 2008

Participants:

Wallis Annenberg, *Annenberg Foundation*
Michael Bloomberg, *mayor of New York City*
Lauren Bon, *Annenberg Foundation*
Willie Brown, *former speaker, California Assembly; former mayor of San Francisco*
Margaret Carlson, *Bloomberg News, The Week*
Jay Carney, *Time*
Geoffrey Cowan, *USC Annenberg*
Gray Davis, *former governor of California*
Matthew Dowd, *brand strategist and former advisor to President Bush*
Harold Ford Jr., *Democratic Leadership Council chairman and former congressman*
Susan Kennedy, *Office of Governor of California*
Michael Kinsley, *columnist*
Sherry Lansing, *Sherry Lansing Foundation*
Janet Napolitano, *governor of Arizona*
Lawrence O'Donnell, *MSNBC*
John Podesta, *Center for American Progress*
Richard Riordan, *former mayor of Los Angeles*
Arnold Schwarzenegger, *governor of California*
Kathleen Sebelius, *governor of Kansas*
Maria Shriver, *former NBC News correspondent*
Antonio Villaraigosa, *mayor of Los Angeles*
Kevin Wall, *Live Earth*
Juan Williams, *NPR and Fox News*
Judy Woodruff, *PBS's NewsHour*

Participants:

David Abshire, *Center for the Study of the Presidency*
Mayor Michael Bloomberg, *New York City*
David Boren, *former U.S. senator, Oklahoma*
Bill Brock, *former U.S. senator, Tennessee*
William Cohen, *former defense secretary and U.S. senator, Maine*
John Danforth, *former U.S. senator, Missouri*
Susan Eisenhower, *the Eisenhower Group*
Robert Graham, *former U.S. senator, Florida*
Chuck Hagel, *U.S. senator, Nebraska*
Gary Hart, *former U.S. senator, Colorado*
Angus King, *former governor of Maine*
Jim Leach, *former U.S. congressman, Iowa*
Sam Nunn, *former U.S. senator, Georgia*
Edward Perkins, *former ambassador*
Chuck Robb, *former U.S. senator, Virginia*
Mark White, *former Texas governor*
Christine Todd Whitman, *former New Jersey governor*

Center on Communication Leadership

Geoffrey Cowan, *director*
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The Center on Communication Leadership is a research, policy and education center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. The Center organizes courses, programs, seminars and symposia for scholars, students and working professionals to prepare current and future leaders in a media industry undergoing profound transformation.

The Center also conducts and sponsors research, projects and programmatic activities in a variety of areas, including the **Role of Media in a Democracy**, **The Future of News**, the **Institute for Photographic Empowerment**, and **The Constitution and the Press**, featuring an examination of journalism and government secrecy highlighted by the national tour of Geoffrey Cowan's play "Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers."

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