

INTRODUCTION

The University of Utah had the distinct pleasure of hosting a very unique political science conference in January 2003. The conference, co-hosted by the University and the Campaign Legal Center in Washington, DC, combined a keynote address by a prominent political scientist, a student town hall of 1,000-plus students featuring Senator John McCain of Arizona, two public radio panels of political science experts sponsored by the Hinckley Institute Coffee and Politics Series and a two-day discussion on current issues in campaign finance reform. The conference brought together political scientists, think tank directors, activists, nationally recognized political pundits, University students, community members, former and current Members of Congress, and University faculty and Trustees to discuss the American electoral system. This event was a great opportunity to recognize the University of Utah and promote its role in facilitating a national public policy discussion.

In December 2001, the University received a two-year grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to establish a campaign and media studies program. This program encompasses coursework, conferences, and an internship program at the Campaign Legal Center for undergraduate and law students. The Political Science conference was the first conference hosted by the University in conjunction with this program.

Professor David B. Magleby, dean of the Family, Home and Social Science College at Brigham Young University, opened the conference with a keynote address entitled, "Campaign Finance Reform: Past, Present and Future" at the University Museum of Fine Arts. His prepared comments are included in this volume and set the stage for the discussions that took place over the following two days.

The Hinckley Institute hosted two radio panel discussions with conference participants that focused on the 2002 elections both nationally and locally. These discussions were taped and replayed on public radio over the weeks following the event.

The highlight of the three-day conference was the student town hall hosted by Republican Senator McCain of Arizona. Senator McCain spoke to a group of more than 1,000 students assembled in the Student Union building. He addressed questions on multiple topics ranging from campaign finance reform to North Korea to the need for increased civic involvement by American youth. The student body was joined by University faculty, the Board of Trustees and conference participants. The town hall was covered by all four of the major television networks in Salt Lake City, the *Associated Press*, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, *The Deseret News* and the *Utah Chronicle*.

Finally, the conference concluded with a three-hour discussion where participants discussed the future of campaign finance reform. A few recent events created the backdrop to the discussions. In February 2002, Congress passed the largest and most substantive campaign finance reform measure in twenty years. The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (Reform Act) was signed into law by President Bush on March 27, 2002 and regulates the size and sources of contributions to political parties and the expenditure of corporate and labor funds in federal elections. The Reform Act was challenged immediately after passage and the Supreme Court will soon decide whether or not aspects of the law are deemed unconstitutional. These recent events and the pending litigation set the stage for a powerful discussion of "What Next?" Questions addressed included: How can the reform and academic communities utilize the substantial body of knowledge produced in connection with this litigation for other reform issues? What should the community of political scientists who studied the former campaign finance regime address next? What other policy reforms should campaign finance reformers turn to now? What other areas of crisis need to be addressed by Congress?

The second topic of discussion was the pending breakdown of the presidential public financing system. The system was designed to provide financial resources for presidential candidates to compete effectively while reducing the influence of special interests. Participants addressed their concerns with the unraveling of the once-successful system. Questions discussed included: Why will the system collapse? What are the documented problems with the system? What are potential solutions? Is a total overhaul necessary or can minor modifications be made in order to preserve the program? Trevor Potter, general counsel to the Legal

Center, moderated each of the discussions.

The record that follows is a summary of the keynote address, the two radio panels, the town hall discussion with Senator McCain, and the two working group discussions that took place on the next reform steps and the crisis of the presidential public financing system. We thank each of the participants for their insight and openness to new approaches and ideas. It is our hope that this body of work will lead to additional research, thought and discussion beyond the three-day conference hosted by the University of Utah.

Ted Wilson

Director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics