

Pennsylvania and the Presidency: A Twain That Seldom Meets

PENNSYLVANIA'S DISMAL RECORD in producing presidents and presidential candidates comprises one of the enduring riddles of American political history. It is all the more surprising given the size of the state's electoral vote, the skills of its political leaders, and the campaign resources it has made available to presidential candidates. Pennsylvania claims but one president as a favorite son: James Buchanan, elected in 1856. Ironically, few presidents have been more prepared to assume the duties of the presidency than the "sage of Wheatland." But the verdict of history has not been kind to Buchanan. Indeed, some observers have suggested that his leadership failure during the sectional crisis means the nation will never again entrust the presidency to a Pennsylvanian.

That is not to say that Pennsylvanians have not had their chances to take the White House. In 1880, the Democrats nominated Winfield Scott Hancock to be the party's standard bearer against another general, James A. Garfield of Ohio. Known as "Hancock the Superb," he had made his reputation at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Noted for his personal integrity, a rare and welcome public asset in the age of "Grantism" and robber barons, he had been a perennial contender for the nomination. The retirement of Rutherford B. Hayes and the close balance of the parties meant that any northern Democrat would have a good chance at victory.

Hancock was a viable candidate in part because he had not been tarred by the pervasive corruption of the era and had taken no controversial stands on monetary policy, a constant source of political controversy in the late nineteenth century. Unfortunately for Hancock and the Democrats, their position on the other great issue of the times, the tariff, undercut their strength in the North.

Running against Garfield and an entrenched Republican machine, Hancock lost the popular vote by about two thousand votes in what was one of the closest popular vote contests in American history. (The

Electoral College margin was wider: 214 to 155.) Since Hancock's defeat, no major party nominee for the nation's highest office has called Pennsylvania home. In more recent history, a Pennsylvanian's most serious presidential bid was made in 1964, when Governor William Scranton, a moderate, challenged conservative Barry Goldwater for the Republican nomination. When the efforts of the leading moderate candidates, George W. Romney and Nelson A. Rockefeller, stumbled, Scranton entered the contest. Although Scranton stitched together a ragtag campaign at a time when Goldwater was amassing delegates, he made it exciting for a while. Scranton anticipated, but did not receive, a coveted endorsement from former president Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was then living in Gettysburg. Scranton simply did not have the numbers at the national convention in San Francisco, and Goldwater won the nomination.¹

Following Scranton's effort, Pennsylvania has been mostly a footnote in presidential nominating campaigns. One of those footnotes was Governor Milton Shapp. When Shapp announced his presidential bid in 1975, he surprised almost everybody. Few leaders in the state Democratic Party wanted him to run; even most of his advisors thought it a mistake. Shapp's candidacy drew little national attention and had even less electoral success. His disastrous showing in the March 12 Florida primary, where he ran behind "no preference," was the final blow to his candidacy. Soon after the primary, Shapp withdrew from the contest. His presidential sojourn was politically costly—the campaign so preoccupied his attention that it affected his scandal-ridden second term in the governor's mansion.²

Since Shapp, other Pennsylvanians have been mentioned as presidential aspirants. Many expected U.S. senator John Heinz to seek the Republican nomination before his untimely death in 1991. For his part, former U.S. senator Rick Santorum, a conservative icon, was seen as a possible candidate for 2008, representing the hard-right wing of the party, but Santorum suffered a stinging defeat in 2006 at the hands of Robert Casey. Two recent Pennsylvania governors—Tom Ridge and Ed Rendell—have occasionally been promoted as potential candidates, but

¹ G. Terry Madonna, *Pivotal Pennsylvania: Presidential Politics from FDR to the Twenty-First Century* (Mansfield, PA, 2008).

² Paul B. Beers covers the Shapp presidential bid in Paul B. Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics Today and Yesterday: The Tolerable Connection* (University Park, PA, 1980).

neither of them have taken overt steps to seek the presidency.

The only Pennsylvanian since Milton Shapp to enter the presidential sweepstakes was U.S. senator Arlen Specter. Like Shapp's bid, Specter's campaign was brief and futile. Specter was convinced that the party had drifted too far to the right. He believed that only a moderate Republican could win the presidency against Bill Clinton.³ Despite an aggressive national campaign, the senator's candidacy gained no traction, even in Pennsylvania. His high-water mark was an early endorsement by his Senate colleague Rick Santorum, but that translated into few votes. Specter's efforts to win the early delegate selection events in Iowa and New Hampshire were unproductive. He ended his campaign in November 1995, when it became clear he could not secure the votes of conservative Republicans.

A final footnote to the saga of failure recorded by Pennsylvanians seeking the presidency belongs to Alfred M. "Alf" Landon of Kansas, a native Pennsylvanian who was nominated by the Republicans in 1936. Landon was born in West Middlesex, Mercer County, in 1887. He returned to his birthplace to start his campaign, but the visit provided little electoral help. He lost in Pennsylvania—and nationally—by a landslide to the popular incumbent, Franklin D. Roosevelt. On Election Day, Roosevelt trounced Landon by more than eleven million votes.⁴

The One-Party State

Pennsylvania's history as a predominantly one-party state stands as one of the two factors most responsible for the state's dismal production of presidential candidates. Throughout much of American history, and especially in the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries, presidential candidates tended to come from the large, competitive states rather than from states dominated by one party. Indeed, from Thomas Jefferson's election in 1800 until the 1950s, one-party political control characterized Pennsylvania. From the Civil War to the 1950s, the Republicans dominated, although Democrats did win several statewide

³ For Specter's personal account of his presidential campaign, see Arlen Specter with Charles Robbins, *Passion for Truth: From Finding JFK's Single Bullet to Questioning Anita Hill to Impeaching Bill Clinton* (New York, 2000).

⁴ Landon's political career is covered in Donald R. McCoy, *Landon of Kansas* (Lincoln, NE, 1966).

elections during the New Deal period. Throughout this era of one-party rule, party leaders were occupied with patronage politics and less interested in national issues than in the spoils that accrued from electoral victories.

Arguably then, Pennsylvania's failure to produce more viable presidential candidates is closely linked to its political history from the end of the Civil War until the 1950s. In particular, its electoral size, combined with successive decades of one-party control, made it a much-prized state. Yet, it was a safe haven for national Republicans who did not need a Pennsylvanian on the national ticket to guarantee the Keystone State's electoral votes. For their part, Pennsylvania Democrats had little chance of delivering the state to their party's nominee. This political reality discouraged national Democrats from nominating a Pennsylvanian; there was no advantage in doing so. As a result, in the period from the Civil War to the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Republican Party's domination of Pennsylvania created the conditions under which Pennsylvania politicians came to play the role of "kingmaker," influencing who was nominated and sharing in the patronage rewards that came with victory.

Republicans were victorious in gubernatorial elections for many years. They maintained control of the state house from 1885 until 1934 and the state senate from 1880 until 1936—the longest period any party controlled the house or senate in state history. In effect, Pennsylvania became a one-party mega state, which had profound consequences for Republican presidential nominating contests. In some cases, Pennsylvanians were part of the backroom deal making that would secure candidates their nominations. In others instances, Keystone State governors declared favorite-son candidacies in an effort to secure patronage for the state. At the same time, these favorite sons doubtless hoped for a convention deadlock that might turn delegates in their direction.

Three political leaders—Simon Cameron, Matthew Quay, and Boies Penrose—successively led the state Republican Party during this era. As elected officials, and by working behind the scenes, they controlled state and federal patronage and often directed legislative policymaking. They occasionally played the role of kingmakers, participating in the secret meetings and the backroom deal making that dominated the presidential nomination process well into the twentieth century. Three examples illustrate the influence of Pennsylvania's kingmakers during this period. Not every kingmaker ended up actually making a king, nor did the kingmakers

themselves always follow the same script.⁵

The first example illustrates those instances when the Pennsylvania political bosses ultimately failed to exercise their will in naming the presidential candidate. President Rutherford B. Hayes made it clear in his 1877 inaugural address that he would not seek a second term. Hayes later had second thoughts, but it hardly mattered; by the end of his first year, the Republican old guard was ready to dump him. His support for civil-service reform was probably the last straw.

Undeterred by the scandals of the second Grant term, a group of national GOP leaders calling themselves “Stalwarts” schemed in 1880 to nominate Ulysses S. Grant for a third term. Three major Republican leaders in Pennsylvania—Simon Cameron, Donald Cameron, and Matthew Quay—were part of the effort on behalf of a Grant restoration. Of the three, Simon Cameron was the closest confidant and advisor to the former president. In Pennsylvania, the first step in the process was to hold an early meeting of the Republican State Committee for the purpose of lining up delegate support for Grant and to forestall alternatives. There was, however, opposition within the state from supporters of Maine congressman James G. Blaine. Much of it came from a reform group in Philadelphia, The Committee of 100. However, party leaders were ultimately able to consolidate their effort behind Grant; he earned the support of the Republican State Committee, 133 to 118, not a clean sweep for the Grant proponents, but a formidable backing nonetheless.

Nationally, the Stalwarts were opposed by the other faction in the party, the “Half Breeds,” most of whom supported Treasury Secretary John Sherman of Ohio. Subsequently, the party’s national convention meeting in Chicago was deadlocked for more than thirty ballots when neither faction would budge. Finally, a compromise was reached with the nomination of Congressman James Garfield of Ohio. Throughout the balloting, Pennsylvania’s Don Cameron, then the Republican national chairman, kept pressing for Grant, but it was to no avail. The party needed a fresh face if it was going to hold on to power in 1880, and Garfield was the right man for that purpose.⁶

⁵ Philip Klein and Ari Hoogenboom, *A History of Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA, 1980), 356–68.

⁶ The activities of the Pennsylvania Republican leaders at the 1880 convention can be found in Herbert Eaton, *Presidential Timber: A History of Nominating Conventions, 1868–1960* (New York, 1964), 67–86.

Twenty years later, events in 1900 demonstrated the role of serendipity in kingmaker politics as well as how the best-laid plans of the bosses could backfire. New York governor Theodore Roosevelt had a long and complicated relationship with the political bosses in his home state. Roosevelt was undoubtedly a reformer, but he was a reformer who depended on the support of bosses and their machines. Roosevelt and the Republican satraps tolerated each other even while warily watching their respective backs. In truth, Roosevelt was anathema to the machines, but his brand of responsible government, “progressive” reform, and personal charisma proved popular with voters. Still, TR needed the machines’ manpower and other resources. It was a mutually valuable connection. Bosses needed his voter appeal to stay in power, and he required their aid to get elected. But the bosses never trusted him. In 1900, they thought they had the opportunity to kick Roosevelt “upstairs” by securing the vice presidential nomination for him on a ticket led by Ohio’s safely conservative William McKinley, a former congressman and two-term governor. Roosevelt was unenthusiastic, but went along with the scheme engineered by boss Tom Platt of New York and boss Matthew Quay of Pennsylvania. TR figured he could earn a law degree and write books in his spare time while serving in an office that specified few duties beyond presiding over the Senate.

In the process of orchestrating Roosevelt’s nomination for vice president, Platt and Quay became inadvertently the most successful kingmakers in American history. Within the year McKinley was dead, shot by an assassin, and Roosevelt was in the White House.

Finally, the third example illustrates a missed chance by one of Pennsylvania’s would-be kingmakers. It began when Republican governor John Fine appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine and was featured in a story called the “President Maker?” *Time* published the issue just prior to the opening of the 1952 Republican national convention because Fine was one of several political leaders who controlled large numbers of delegates at a time when neither of the front-runners had a secure majority heading to the national convention in Chicago. *Time* assumed that Fine would decide whether Pennsylvania’s delegates would support U.S. Army general Dwight D. Eisenhower or Ohio senator Robert Taft. In fact, Fine’s influence was much weaker than anticipated, and what influence he had was dissipated by his failure to act decisively in the weeks leading up to the convention.

Fine only had some influence on about thirty of Pennsylvania's seventy delegates—enough to be an important factor in moving Pennsylvania's delegation but not so much as to dictate its decision. Fine attracted considerable attention from the press, and he was subject to cajoling from representatives of both leading contenders. Support for Eisenhower was strong in Pennsylvania. Ike's war-hero status made him popular, and he was an adopted state son, having resided in the state since 1950. He also had won the Pennsylvania primary decisively. Fine, however, shrugged off the Pennsylvania relationships as well as the considerable pressure to endorse Ike. By maintaining a position of neutrality, he positioned himself to play kingmaker.

But two incidents marred his kingmaker role. First, he had an unflattering outburst on national television during a credential fight when he attempted to obtain a recess. (The convention chair had promised to recognize him, but neglected to do so.) The second incident was fatal to his kingmaker aspirations. Fine dithered too long before trying to swing thirty key votes to Eisenhower. The honor of putting Ike over the top instead went to Minnesota. Only after the general had secured the necessary majority for the nomination did Pennsylvania vote. Initially, Fine played his hand closely to his vest. Overtaken by events, he anticlimactically declared himself for Eisenhower only after he had lost control of the situation. Fine's political career never recovered from this fiasco. He left the convention in humiliation, was largely ignored by the Eisenhower campaign team in the fall, and faded into political obscurity.⁷

Favorite Sons in State Presidential Politics

One-party control and the party bosses' obsession with patronage often resulted in "favorite-son candidacies." Bosses put forth favorite sons as presidential candidates in order to hold the state delegations together for the purpose of negotiating patronage advantages—jobs and appointments in any new administration. Typically, state governors won nominations as favorite sons for that purpose. Only seldom were they serious or viable presidential candidates in their own right. Bosses employed the favorite-son gambit to strengthen the state's negotiating position at national conventions. The tactic also held open the prospect

⁷ "President Maker?" *Time*, June 30, 1952, 18–21. See Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 184–85 for a brief account of Fine's convention activities, and Eaton, *Presidential Timber*, 432–53.

that a deadlocked convention might actually nominate a Pennsylvania favorite son, but that never happened. Two examples illustrate the range of roles played by the favorite son candidates.

The first exemplifies what might be termed the “pure case” favorite-son candidate—a candidate with no real prospect at the nomination and one who mainly served to hold the state delegation together. The Democrats entered the 1876 presidential election confident of winning the presidency for the first time since James Buchanan. Growing unease over Reconstruction, the multiple scandals of the Grant administration, and an economic depression beginning in 1873 were the main electoral issues and gave the Democrats hope for victory. Concern about the scandals pushed Republican Party leaders to nominate the scrupulously honest and scandal-free governor of Ohio, Rutherford B. Hayes. He had the advantages of an exemplary Civil War record and a reformer’s instincts.

Hayes was not a consensus choice in 1876. Other prospects for the Republican nomination included the former Speaker of the House James G. Blaine of Maine, perhaps the most popular Republican in the nation, Indiana senator Oliver P. Morton, and Pennsylvania favorite son and governor, John Hartranft. Hartranft was Boss Cameron’s candidate. A Civil War hero, he, for the most part, did the Cameron machine’s bidding. His tenure as governor had coincided with the depression of 1873 and its aftermath and was punctuated by a series of strikes in which the governor called out the state militia on behalf of management. Hartranft’s favorite-son candidacy served two purposes. Should the convention be deadlocked, he could be a compromise choice. Second, his candidacy locked up the state delegation, which then could be used as barter for state patronage jobs and for appointments to high positions in the new administration. Both of these factors would be important considerations in future Pennsylvania favorite-son candidacies.

The party duly nominated Hartranft. His fifty-eight votes on the first ballot came overwhelmingly from Pennsylvania. The real fight was between the forces of Blaine and Hayes. Hayes had the advantage of being the second choice of many delegates, while he had not been part of the disputes or scandals that had plagued the Grant administration. Blaine, on the other hand, exuded more than the faint stench of corruption. Ultimately, the party nominated Hayes on the seventh ballot with support from the Pennsylvania delegation.⁸

⁸ Eaton, *Presidential Timber*, 43–59.

A final example of a favorite-son candidacy occurred twenty years later. The great debate in the 1896 presidential election centered on the currency question and whether or not the Democrats would support a bimetallic monetary policy. The issue pitted the “sound money” proponents against the “silverites.” At the outset of the campaign, it was not clear that the silverites could successfully move the party to adopt a free-silver position. In the run-up to the convention, the Pennsylvania Democratic delegation was committed to former governor Robert Pattison, who was nationally identified as a “sound money” supporter. As usual, odds were strongly against a favorite-son candidacy. But the tactic permitted the party to nominate Pattison for president, with party leaders arranging a deal to deliver the state’s delegates’ votes to the eventual nominee at some crucial juncture. At their state meeting in late April, Democrats locked up support for Pattison and also approved a sound-money plank, repudiating the notion of free silver. The state delegation stayed with Pattison through four agonizing ballots. Silverite William Jennings Bryan, whose “cross of gold” speech galvanized the delegates, earned the nomination on the fifth ballot, and Pattison returned to obscurity.⁹

By the 1970s, major modifications to the presidential nomination process changed the nature of candidate selection and the role of the kingmakers. After 1968, no candidate would win a party nomination without winning delegates through a process that required active campaigning in state primary elections. Hubert Humphrey, in 1968, was the last candidate to win a major party nomination without entering state primaries. Primaries in previous elections were important, but they did not necessarily determine the nominee. (They did help seal Robert Taft’s defeat in 1952, Estes Kefauver’s defeat in 1956, Hubert Humphrey’s loss to John F. Kennedy in 1960, and Nelson Rockefeller’s failed bid against Barry Goldwater in 1964.) After the major parties implemented delegate rule changes beginning with the 1972 conventions, the number of primaries increased dramatically—from seventeen in 1968 to thirty-nine in 1992. The voters now reigned supreme, and the boss-ridden, old smoke-filled-room nomination negotiations became a thing of the past. Other factors surely influenced the diminution of the power of the kingmaker

⁹ William E. Lyons, “Populism in Pennsylvania, 1892–1901,” *Pennsylvania History* 32 (1965): 49–65; S. K. Stevens, “The Election of 1896 in Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History* 4 (1937): 65–87; Eaton, *Presidential Timber*, 155–79.

and the favorite-son practice, but by the 1970s a new nomination system had emerged. No Pennsylvanian has yet competed successfully under the new rules of the game that require substantial personal fundraising, effective use of the media, and the ability to run viable campaigns in early primary states.

The Role of Political Culture in Pennsylvania Presidential History

Pennsylvania's prevailing political culture also has had a constraining effect on the state's role in producing presidential timber. As developed by scholar Daniel Elazar, the concept of political culture provides a framework with which to analyze the presidential selection process. Elazar has argued that American political culture is a composite of three subcultures, all of which are linked to disparate streams of immigration across this country. Elazar labeled these three political subcultures the individualistic, the moralistic, and the traditionalistic. Each reflects its own distinctive synthesis of the national culture. He further argued that the political culture of each American state is a mix of these three subcultures, with one of the three subcultures usually dominant within a particular state. Elazar's ideas about political culture have been used to help explain variations in processes, institutional structures, political behavior, and the policies and programs of state and local governments.¹⁰

Scholars have portrayed Pennsylvania as having a predominantly individualistic political culture. According to Elazar, the individualistic political culture frames the democratic process as a marketplace and the government as an institution created for strictly utilitarian reasons arising from private needs or demands. The individualistic political culture has six salient characteristics:

1. Politics is primarily conceived as a means through which individuals may improve themselves socially and economically, i.e. politics is entrepreneurial.
2. The role of government is not one that emphasizes community cooperation or shared goals.
3. Politics is a business, and the political culture tends to eschew ideological concerns.

¹⁰ Daniel Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the States* (New York, 1966); Daniel Elazar, ed., *The Ecology of American Political Culture: Readings* (New York, 1975).

4. Both politicians and citizens look upon political activity as a process in which citizens have little role.
5. The public tends to think of politics as a dirty and disreputable business.
6. Corruption is expected, if not accepted.

Nowhere in the empirical research is there a systematic examination of the influence political culture has had on a state's development of national leadership, specifically presidential candidates. However, Pennsylvania's failure to produce presidents or presidential contenders qualifies as a test case. Compared to large nearby states, such as Virginia (eight presidents), New York (four presidents), Massachusetts (four presidents), or Ohio (seven presidents), Pennsylvania's record (one president) is poor. In fact, even Texas, which did not join the union until 1845 (two presidents), North Carolina, which actually left the Union during the Civil War (two presidents), and tiny Vermont (two presidents) have produced more presidents than Pennsylvania. Also revealing is the paucity of serious presidential candidates from Pennsylvania. Over the past half century, with major party realignments, new voter blocs, more "popular" and money-driven candidacies, the decline of strong party identification among many voters, and other factors that changed the national and state political landscapes, no major party candidate has come from Pennsylvania. Then there is the equally unimpressive record of producing vice presidents. Other states have regularly produced vice presidents—for example, New York (eleven), Indiana (five), Massachusetts (four), Kentucky (three), and Texas (three). Pennsylvania claims exactly one, George Mifflin Dallas, who served under James K. Polk (1845–49).

One tenable explanation of the effect of Pennsylvania's individualistic-entrepreneurial culture on the process that produces presidents and presidential candidates looks to the state's history as a one-party state between the Civil War and the 1950s. However, some other states have also been one-party states, and yet they produced multiple presidents or presidential candidates. Thus, a fuller explanation must look to other factors as well. One other possible explanation is that Pennsylvania's historic failure to produce more viable presidential candidates is linked closely to the state's unique political culture—a political culture that emphasizes individualistic values, entrepreneurial orientations, and conservative ideals. Arguably, this political culture has encouraged a nonideological

approach to public affairs. Eschewing great political theories or abstract reforms, Pennsylvania has been a place where the people considered government to be just another job to get done—and not necessarily the most important job. Consequently, the state's talented citizens have been more likely to pursue careers in business or commerce than in politics or policy. The laurels (and the financial rewards) have gone to the Carnegies, the Wanamakers, and the Mellons. Absent or otherwise occupied have been the Wilsons, the Roosevelts, and the Kennedys.

It is plausible to argue that what would have been a governing class instead chose business over politics because business was socially acceptable and more financially rewarding. Businessmen of consequence—and there were many of them in an industrial colossus such as Pennsylvania—thought nationally. State and local affairs, by contrast, seemed parochial to them and easily managed by surrogates, if worth managing at all. Indeed, those who did become national leaders did so as cabinet or sub-cabinet appointees of several presidents, reflecting their orientation and interests. A few years ago, *The Almanac of American Politics* bluntly described Pennsylvania's political history: "(Pennsylvania) was a state where important people were in business, and politics was left to faintly disreputable leaders."¹¹

Accordingly, the culture has encouraged Pennsylvania's leaders to develop qualities that politically served them within the state, such as a focus on localism, but did not translate well in national politics. The result has been that, historically, most Pennsylvania political leaders have been interested primarily in dominating state government and have shown little interest in national issues. Consequently, these factors have created an intricate natural-selection process whereby those who prosper in state politics tend to possess political skills, outlooks, and orientations that do not sustain them in the pursuit of national candidacies. Many of those who rise and succeed in state politics may not possess the attributes necessary for success in national presidential politics.

The state's history as a one-party state provides some explanation, but not a complete one, for Pennsylvania's inability to produce presidential candidates. A fuller explanation for Pennsylvania's unimpressive record should include political culture as a critical factor. In particular, Pennsylvania's political culture has not fostered or rewarded the sorts of

¹¹ Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, *The Almanac of American Politics* (Washington, DC, 1984), 996.

skills and qualities that are acquired by many successful national politicians. Consequently, many of those who have succeeded in state politics may not have possessed the attributes necessary for success in national presidential politics.

Some Conclusions

Why hasn't Pennsylvania produced more presidents and presidential nominees? This is an often-asked and seldom-answered question. The answer lies in examining the state's unique post-Civil War political history within the broader context of the state's dominant "individualistic" political culture.

While the combination of political history and political culture help to explain Pennsylvania's lagging production of presidents, these factors do not necessarily predict its future. Importantly, the one-party dominance that partially explains the phenomenon ended at least forty years ago. In fact, much of Pennsylvania's image of political disrepute stemmed from the years between the Civil War and the early twentieth century—an era now long gone. Those politicians have been replaced by newer generations with skills and abilities that compare favorably to those of other national leaders. Also, a refined selection process controlled by primaries now exists.

Moreover, the state's economy has undergone transformative changes and is now decades removed from the industrial-based economy that historically characterized Pennsylvania. Fewer than 20 percent of Pennsylvanians remain employed in traditional manufacturing. As the economy has been transformed, the political culture has also evolved. Reform, for example, long a dirty word in Pennsylvania politics, now gets a respectful hearing in the state's political debates and even in the state capitol.

Furthermore, patronage-based nomination processes are mostly a practice of the past, while corruption, long the *bête noire* of Pennsylvania politics, has largely dissipated. Not since the 1970s has there been a major scandal in the executive branch of state government. Most importantly, the state has become politically competitive. Neither national party can take Pennsylvania's electoral vote for granted, as was amply demonstrated in the 2000 and 2004 general elections when both major party presidential candidates repeatedly visited the state to campaign. In addition, the

election results showed Pennsylvania to be one of the most competitive states in the contest.

Nevertheless, the ghosts of Buchanan, Cameron, Penrose, and other leaders of the past continue to hover across the Pennsylvania historical landscape, while the stereotype fostered by memories of those men and their times still endures. If that stereotype ever was true, it is not true today. If it ever was useful, it is not useful today. It is now more fable than fact, more hyperbole than history. And it has long outlived any purpose it might have had.

Still, it is likely to take a president—or maybe two—to exorcise Pennsylvania from the steel grasp of its onetime sordid past. What one president in the nineteenth century started may take another president in the twenty-first century to finish.

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