

The Civic Functionality of Campaigns: Voter Competence, Mobilization, and Salience

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A. Introduction

Leading to an election, television screens are consumed by the faces of candidates; radio shows are teeming with voices of campaign professionals; analysts and voters are being endlessly presented with new information, policy standpoints, and poll numbers. In this busy day and age it can be difficult, inconvenient, and time consuming for voters to seek out political knowledge for themselves. Campaigns can be seemingly interminable and it is far easier for a voter to take their information from these ongoing campaigns than to pursue the information from various sources on their own. Campaigns supply voters with data, analyses, and platforms that can aid them in mobilizing and casting an informed vote.

Thomas A. Holbrook, Wilder Crane Professor of Government at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and former editor of *American Politics Research* discusses the functions that campaigns hold civilly. Holbrook (2011) states that campaigns have two civic functions which are voter education and voter mobilization. “Campaigns are nothing if not large-scale efforts to generate information with the express purpose of persuading voters” (Holbrook 2011, p. 14). Beyond their obvious purpose of shaping election outcomes, campaigns do a lot for the electorate. Campaigns unveil important issues, create plans to fix them, and give voters a reminder as to why it is important to vote. Without campaigns it is quite possible that a large majority of the electorate would not vote and, with that, the driving force behind democracy would be diminished.

This paper intends to analyze how voter competence and mobilization are affected by the process of campaigns. Through evaluating the meaning and importance of voter education and turnout and how each changes as campaigns progress, this paper demonstrates how campaigns

and the communications that accompany them push the electorate to the polls with key information in hand.

II. Campaign Civic Functions

Campaigns possess two civic functions that drive the focus on election outcomes, voter education and voter mobilization. To understand if campaigns really matter, one must be able to comprehend the basic civic functions of campaigns and the effect campaigns can have on the masses. However, the success of campaigns in regards to educating and mobilizing voters is highly debatable throughout academia. Regardless, understanding how the two civic functions of campaigns operate is fundamental to shaping an opinion as to whether campaigns matter or not.

Voter Education

Voter education in America is lacking overall. “Voter’s lack of information undermines a defense of democracy rooted in electoral accountability” (Ashworth & Mesquita 2014, p. 1). This really illustrates how the debate around voter knowledge is rooted in the idea that citizens cannot live up to their democratic duties. If citizens are uninformed and cannot make rational decisions, this can undermine the legitimacy of a democracy. “If voters lack basic information about the policy choices made by political leaders, then, the argument goes, elections are neither a useful mechanism for selecting public leaders nor a credible check on the behavior of those leaders” (Ashworth & Mesquita 2014, p. 2). Voters that are uninformed widely utilize a series of cues that aid in their decision making process even if there is lack of actual information (Herrnson 2012). Incumbency, for example, is the most frequently used cue by voters because a candidate’s name, to some, can be enough to comfortably cast a vote (Herrnson 2012). The reason that incumbents are used as the main cue by voters is because

...the incumbent should be held accountable for the government's performance, the state of the economy, and the nation's foreign involvements, or other issues, these voters quickly determine whether to support the status quo and vote for the incumbent or to advocate change and cast their ballot for the challenger (Herrnson 2012, p. 206).

The lack of voter information is aided, in part, by campaigns. This is especially true with uneducated voters.

According to Thomas M. Holbrook (2011), "campaigns are nothing if not large-scale efforts to generate information with the express purpose of persuading voters" (p. 14). This claim by Holbrook illustrates to the readers that campaigns only generate information in hopes of receiving a vote. Holbrook also goes on to mention that campaigns will generate information to "enlighten" voters dealing with issues while also reinforcing the importance of ideology, partisanship, and presidential performance and that we should not underestimate the information acquired during campaigns. The information from campaigns can have crucial consequences for both voters and the election outcome (Holbrook 2011).

Most recent literature regarding voter learning suggests that voters may not be highly informed on their own but valuable knowledge can be gained throughout the campaign process. For example, Holbrook (2011) illustrates how during presidential campaigns, voters absorb a great deal of information they hear, especially during the time of the contested primary season, the convention period, and the debates. "During these periods voters absorbed about 80 percent of what they learned as a whole in the 2000 campaign" (Holbrook 2011, p. 15).

During presidential debates, "literature...indicated that that [presidential debates] tend to increase citizens knowledge while also influencing the salience of some of the issues discussed" (Holbrook 2011, p. 15). Debates tend to benefit those in the electorate that have a very low amount of preexisting information. After the times of the contested primary season, the

convention period, and the debates, little information tends to be gathered. One very crucial point made by Holbrook (2011) is that generally during an election, the gap between low-knowledge and high-knowledge voters typically widens, but sometimes will be diminished after presidential debates.

Debates certainly contribute to the amount of knowledge held by the electorate but are not the only source; campaign advertising also contributes to voter knowledge (Holbrook 2011). For example, information and dates from the National Election Survey show that “exposure to advertisements had a significant effect on knowledge of candidates’ issue positions-but a much more pronounced impact on respondent’s ability to articulate reasons for voting for or against a certain candidate” (Holbrook 2011, p. 15). Also much like debates, evidence shows that campaign advertising benefits those with relatively low levels of information (Holbrook 2011).

Though it seems as if campaigns do contribute to voter knowledge, it is still difficult to determine the exact magnitude debates and campaign advertising can have. This lack of certainty is especially prevalent in the area of conventions (Holbrook 2011). Regardless of knowing the exact magnitude that campaigns have toward voter education, it is evident that campaigns do have an effect on the increased education of voters especially regarding the lowly-educated electorate.

Voter Mobilization

Voter mobilization is the other civic function of campaigns. While campaigns aim to educate the electorate in hopes of capturing their vote, the latter can only be achieved if voters actually go to the polls. Holbrook (2011) conveys that much like voter education, voter mobilization is based off of “the selfish pursuit of votes” (p. 16). Analysis also shows that

making direct contact with the electorate is instrumental in mobilization. “The general conclusion is that contacting motivates people to get out the vote” (Holbrook 2011, pg. 16).

Much like with debates, voter mobilization is widely studied regarding presidential campaigns but has mixed results. However, “candidates visit exerted a significant influence, with the impact growing stronger as Election Day approaches” (Holbrook 2011, p. 16). Also, there is significant influence when national party monetary transfers are made to the states. More money that was given to the states tends to lead to levels of increased turnout. The money was used to target constituency groups and encourage them to go out and vote. Studies have also shown that the electorate is also more likely to vote in battle-ground states because voters in battle-ground states tend to talk about campaigns and recall news stories (Holbrook 2011).

A recent debate over campaigns and their effects on the electorate is centered around the issue of negative campaigning. Some make the argument that negative campaigning is actually used to demobilize the electorate and stop them from being active (Holbrook 2011, pg. 17). In the arena of negative campaigning, Holbrook illustrates that there isn't concrete evidence either way. He makes the point that there are conflicting results on negative campaigning. In one study mentioned by Holbrook (2011), the results showed that there was no “consistent pattern of findings concerning the mobilizing or demobilizing effects of negative advertising” (p. 17). Other studies however illustrate that negative campaigning actually can have positive effects regarding voter mobilization. Holbrook (2011) illustrates that a study done by Djupe and Peterson showed that negative campaigning can lead to an increase in the voter turnout at United States' primaries. Much like debates and campaign advertisements, negative campaigning has the greatest influence on low-information voters (Holbrook 2011).

The most modernized method of mobilizing voters is through the emergence of targeted appeals. The idea of targeted appeals, or micro-targeting, has emerged mostly in the last two decades (Hersh & Schaffner 2013). The main goal of micro-targeting is to find voter characteristics and send a campaign message that would suit the voter demographically (Hersh & Schaffner 2013). Field-Experimental data has shown that micro-targeting can increase turnout, but this is usually just a modest amount (Hersh & Schaffner 2013). However, this is easier said than done. “For one thing, voters may not be responsive to directed appeals. They might prefer more inclusive messages” (Hersh & Schaffner 2013, p. 521). This is the main problem that authors Hersh and Schaffner (2013) found with targeted appeals; even though candidates want to transmit effective messages to selective audiences, the audiences may not always be interested. Though targeted appeals seek to identify with a specific demographic, this is only effective if the audience wants to hear the message.

Overall, it is evident that civic functions of campaigns do have major implications on the electorate. Campaigns tend to increase voter knowledge, especially those that start with relatively low-levels of information. Campaigns also increase voter turnout especially when there is direct contact made with the electorate. It is evident that campaigns do affect voter education levels as well as mobilization.

III. Campaign Phases

In order to better understand the process of campaigns and how each part can individually affect the civic functions of voter education and voter mobilization, we need to break down campaigns into four basic phases: the biography phase, the issue phase, the attack phase, and the summation phase (Herrnson 2012). While some phases may pass more quickly than others,

throughout the duration of a campaign, each phase plays a part in how well a particular campaign serves its function to educate and mobilize voters.

Biography Phase

In the biography phase, candidates introduce themselves and allow the public to get to know them on a more personal basis. There is a different way in which incumbents, challengers, and candidates for open seats use the biography phase to get their name out. Incumbents focus on reminding the public of what they have done in the past and they attempt to depict themselves as a well-seasoned leader that already cares about and knows their constituents. Challengers and open-seat candidates, on the other hand, try to avoid the fact that they do not have as much knowledge about the constituency and instead focus on showing what they have accomplished in the public and private sector. Surprisingly, incumbents, challengers, and open-seat candidates do all rely on the same thing to get their name out during this phase: advertisements (Herrnson 2012). Advertisements are a great way for a candidate to display their values and ideas. Advertisements are also effective in getting a candidate's name out. After a voter has seen a face, it is easier for them to match that face with the name on the voting screen on Election Day. Herrnson (2012) tells us that in some cases, candidates broadcast "mini-docudramas" where they tell the public about things like "their war record, community activism, or road to professional success" (p. 231). Herrnson (2012) also tells us about "feel-good" ads in which images or video of the candidate showing nationalism or community pride are shown. These ads most likely do not contain anything in them about issues, but instead focuses on making people feel good about voting for that candidate. The Today show recently posted a video showing an ad that claims to show what political campaign ads actually show (Truthful Political Campaign Ad Goes Viral, 2014). The video shows a fake politician going through the video telling us things like "this

campaign is not about me; it's about creating a version of me that will appeal to you" (Truthful Political Campaign Ad Goes Viral, 2014). This video backs what Herrnson says about how important it is for a candidate to get their name and face out and show their constituents an image of them that will appeal to everyone during the biography phase.

Another way that a candidate can get their name out during the biography phase is to participate in community events in the area that they are competing for a seat. For example, Representative Doug Collins (R-GA9) walked in the Gold Rush Parade in Dahlonega, Georgia with quite a few members of his campaign team and family. Congressman Collins was there himself and made an effort to walk around and shake hands with everyone that he could. Just a few days after the Gold Rush Parade, Doug Collins also made an appearance at the University of North Georgia at an event that hosted a panel of experts on the Korean Peninsula in which over 150 students made an appearance. Congressman Collins' speech was short but he informed everyone about his role in international affairs and extended an invitation to all of the students in attendance to get in touch with his office and look into interning with him in his office in Washington, D.C. He said that as a graduate of University of North Georgia, he would always have a place in his office for a University of North Georgia student. His attendance at these events got his name out through not only the city of Dahlonega, but also at the university. Appearances like this help Doug Collins and ensure that when voting day comes around, people recognize his name.

Another important aspect of the biography phase is the impact that this phase can have on voter competence and voter confidence. David Peterson's (2009) article shows how the biography phase of a campaign educates voters on the candidate and, in turn, boosts their

confidence. This boost in confidence leads to better decision making and better voter turnout. This makes the biography phase crucial in increasing voter turnout.

Issue Phase

The issue phase of the campaign is where candidates use any means of communication to get the word out about what issues they feel strongly about (Herrnson 2012). This phase is similar to the biography phase in that advertisements are once again used as a means of communication, but this phase differs from the biography phase in the respect that the issue phase focuses on getting out information on the candidates policy stances, position, and message. This phase does not focus on helping voters with name recognition as the biography phase does. During this phase, candidates often times purposely bring up issues that they feel strongly about and attempt to show their constituents why it matters to them. For example, if Mr. Smith is running for Senate in the state of Georgia and he feels that he knows a lot about or has helped pass legislation making it easier to get a job in his state, he would likely put this in his issue ad and show people that he has personally helped his constituents in regards to employment.

Although the issue phase may seem fairly straightforward, there has been quite a bit of legislation passed regarding the usage of issue ads. Also vitally important was the Supreme Court decision made in the 1976 Buckley v. Valeo case. This decision established two categories of political advertising: Issue advocacy and Express advocacy (Potter 1999). Express advocacy is defined as advertising that directly recommends the defeat or election of a particular candidate. Express advocacy, unlike issue advocacy, is subject to federal campaign regulations. Issue advocacy, on the other hand, is designed to educate constituents either on a candidate or a topic. Currently, legislation prohibits issue ads from running thirty days before a primary and sixty days before a general election. More importantly, these restrictions prohibit the use of “magic

words” such as “Vote for Dan” or “Don’t Vote for Jones” in issue ads. Any ad that contains any of these magic words is considered an express advocacy ad and must be removed to be determined as an issue ad (Potter 1999).

Franz, Freeman, Goldstein, and Ridout’s article discusses the relationship between political advertising and voter turnout (Franz et al 2008). They come to a conclusion that, although the results may not always be huge, there is a relationship between political advertising and voter turnout that shows that as more political advertisements or issue ads play on the TV, more people are more likely to go out to the polls and vote (Franz et al 2008). This once again shows how political advertising during the biography or issue phase can make a voter feel as though they know more about the election and they will be more likely to go out and vote.

Attack Phase

In the attack phase of the campaign, candidates use modes like TV ads to purposely bring out their opponents shortcomings (Herrnson 2012). In this phase, candidate’s do everything that they can to bring up and publicize issues or discretions that their opponent has had in the past. This could be something as simple as their opponent mistakenly contradicting themselves in an interview, or it could be something as serious as a criminal allegation for fraud or sexual misconduct. Herrnson (2012) tells us that

Television is ideally suited to comparative ads because it enables candidates to present pictures of themselves and their opponent side by side and roll lists of issues down the screen to show themselves on the popular side of salient policies and their opponent on the unpopular side.

He also tells us that it is not uncommon for unflattering pictures of the opponent’s to be chosen for the ads. Many of these negative campaign ads show relationships between the opponent and

an unpopular politician, opponents attending luxurious parties, and even opponents voting pay raises for themselves (Herrnson 2012).

Jeffrey Koch wrote an article about the impact that negative campaign advertisements have on voter knowledge. Koch's (2008) study had interesting results and showed that as more negative campaign ads are released, "citizen's perceptual error of the candidate's ideological position" also increase. In other words, the more negative campaign ads there are, the more citizens *think* they are educated on the candidate, but in reality this process of releasing negative campaign ads just fails to produce an informed electorate (Koch 2008).

Summation Phase

The final phase is the summation phase. In this phase, candidates give their last rebuttals and sum up their campaigns (Herrnson 2012). This is a candidate's last chance to sum up their campaign promises, their platform, and their beliefs. Often times, key visuals from earlier commercials and phrases used during the campaign are repeated. This phase is vital, especially when there are multiple candidates in an election. For the average person, the names on a ballot just look like a bunch of Rs and Ds on a page and, if voters are not educated on the candidates, they often use those two letters to help them choose a candidate. During the summation phase, candidates get the opportunity to make sure that on Election Day, voters recognize their name, can put a face to it, and know that the values of that candidate match up with the values that a constituent would want in an elected representative.

In class, we watched the PBS documentary "Big Sky, Big Money" (Young 2012). This documentary focused on the campaign finance battles in the state of Montana. But, towards the middle of the video, we see an interesting clip in which the attack ads from the attack phase meet with the summation phase. In the last few days of his race for the MT State Representative, John

Ward sends out his final summation ads. He reminds his constituents of the multiple terms he has served and shows them all of the great things he has done for them. His opponent, Mike Miller, was a conservative with little to no political experience. Just as things seemed to look as though it would be a clear win for John Ward, a series of attack ads were sent out to mailboxes all over the state of Montana. These ads said things like “John Ward voted with criminal-coddling liberal activists” and “Are high energy prices killing you? John Ward had a choice” (Young 2012). These ads kept John Ward from winning his race 2008 primary race (Young 2012). In this situation, when attack ads were released during the summation phase of the campaign, the results were detrimental.

After looking at all of these phases, we can see that every step of the campaign can affect voter competence and voter turnout. The biography phase helps people become acquainted with their candidate and allows for a personal relationship between the two to begin. The issue phase allows for candidates to show their strengths and bring into the light the issues that they are most involved with. The attack phase gives candidates a chance to bring up the issues that their opponent battles with the most and gives way for the candidate to once again boost themselves up in the eyes of the voter. Finally, the summation phase is the last step and allows for candidates to remind the people of who they are and what they are fighting for.

Articles by people like Franz, Freeman, Goldstein and Ridout show us that campaigns and campaign ads can in fact increase voter education and therefore mobilize more voters. Also, articles from people like Peterson can show us that as campaign ads and voter knowledge increase, voter confidence also increases, which encourages people to go out and vote for the candidate that they feel will best represent them. But, on the other hand, Jeffrey Koch show us that although campaign ads may help achieve the civic functions of campaigns, negative

campaign ads can actually have the opposite effect and can actually decrease voter knowledge while increasing voter mobilization.

IV. Campaign Communications

Throughout campaigns, the voters see sundry television advertisements, hear a plethora of reviews and predictions on the radio, and are practically bombarded with information, data, and opinions. Campaign communications play a large part in how effective campaigns are at conveying their message and fulfilling their civic functions. Campaigns communicate with the electorate in several different ways including advertising and the media, field work, and the internet. These methods of communicating help to inform and mobilize voters. Campaign communications have six objectives throughout campaigns: “improve a candidate’s name recognition, project a favorable image, set the campaign agenda, exploit the issues, undermine an opponent’s credibility or support, and defend the candidate against attacks” (Herrnson 2012, p. 228). While these objectives are noticeably centered around getting the candidate elected to office, beneath the surface they are also giving voters the information they require and instill them with the drive that they need to get to the polls and make an cognizant decision.

Advertising and the Media

Advertising of all forms including television, radio, and newspaper advertising, is widely used throughout campaigns. While it is known which types of races use predominantly which types of advertisements, it is important to also determine if these advertisements are effective in terms of informing and mobilizing the electorate. Television, radio, and newspaper advertisements all have different effects on different portions of the electorate. For example, if a

candidate runs primarily television advertisements in an area where a large majority of the demographic does not own or watch television, in that scenario, advertisements would not aid in fulfilling the civic functions of campaigns. But if advertising is used wisely and properly, it can certainly play to a candidate's favor. In the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama made wide use of internet advertisements and social networks in an attempt to further connect with millennial voters. As of 2011, Barack Obama had 7,063,365 supporters on Facebook, which places him leaps and bounds ahead of any other politician in the world in regards to his utilization of the internet as a way to connect with voters (Heany et al 2011, p. 177). While using the internet as a source of campaign advertisements and communications is a fairly new concept, television and radio advertisements have been around for quite some time and have proven themselves useful to candidates that utilize them wisely.

It has been shown that campaign advertisements lower the cost of gathering information for the electorate which, in turn, increases voter turnout (Baek 2009). With a large portion of the electorate tuning into television programs, listening to the radio, and surfing the Web, it makes sense for campaign teams to place advertisements where they will most likely be seen. By doing that, campaigns are giving voters another way to receive and retain information rather than seeking it out for themselves. If voters do not have to work nearly as hard to get information but still feel informed enough to be comfortable casting a ballot then that shows that campaigns certainly matter in terms of voter education and turnout.

According to Thomas A. Hollihan (2011), a professor in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern Carolina, political advertisements are being utilized more fervently in an attempt to convince voters to “turn out and vote or to discourage them from voting for the opposing candidate”. These particular advertisements are

especially useful to campaigns because they are in control of the message and, if enough money is spent on them, it is very easy to expose a wide array of citizens to them (Hollihan 145). It comes as no surprise that, over the past decade, the usage of political advertisements via television and the internet has skyrocketed. As voters are spending more time watching television and surfing the internet, these avenues of advertising are becoming more and more appealing to campaigns.

Not only do advertisements and the media play a role in educating and mobilizing voters, but they also play a large role on voter issues salience. When the media focuses more on an issue, that particular issue becomes more important to voters (Hayes 2008). If the media impassions voters about a particular issue, that can certainly aid in maximizing mobilization of voters. Campaigns themselves work to affect voter salience as well, perhaps even before the media. Candidates work to discuss issues that are important to them and their platform primarily during the issue phase, which was discussed earlier. During the issue phase, the electorate is presented with issues that will be key throughout the remainder of the election and could likely be the deciding factor when casting their vote. In order to motivate voters to find some information on their own, campaigns must affect their salience. If campaigns can make voters feel as if an issue is of the utmost importance and can influence them to further research that issue, then campaigns have more than fulfilled a portion of their civic functions by motivating the electorate to further educate themselves politically. Voters that may refrain from voting due to fear of not being well-informed will then have a reason to seek out information and go to the polls, thus increasing voter education and mobilization.

Field Work

While advertising and the media may have the most widespread reach when it comes to voter information, mobilization, and salience, on a more local level, field work can strengthen a community and further educate the electorate. “Field work involves voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, literature drops, the distribution of yard signs and bumper stickers, and other grassroots activities” (Herrnson 2012, p. 244). While this particular form of campaign communication is the most labor-intensive and is almost completely dependent on volunteers, it has a large effect on the mobilization of voters in local areas. This is largely because the majority of field work is person-to-person which is “probably the most effective means of political persuasion and boosting turnout, especially when it’s directly between the candidate and a voter” (Herrnson 2012, p. 244). Field work is appealing to campaigns because it generally involves a large mass of volunteers, therefore the campaign does not have to pay as much money in order to fulfill grassroots activities.

Field work, like certain types of advertising, is not ideal in all areas. Grassroots activities such as yard signs, phone-banking, and literature drops might not be as successful or as well-received in a city area as they might be in a more suburban or rural setting. Field work is a great alternative to television or internet advertisements in cases where portions of the demographic in a candidate’s constituency do not utilize technology in the same manner as those closer to cities do. In that case, door-to-door visits and phone calls help to put the candidate’s name and platform out there while individually encouraging voters to further inform themselves and to mobilize.

An example given earlier of field work within the process of campaigns was that of Congressman Doug Collins, representative of the ninth district of Georgia. During the 2014 midterm elections Congressman Collins made a great effort to motivate the voters in his district

to re-elect him. He had several volunteers that worked to deliver literature door-to-door, phone-bank, and spread information. Not only did his volunteers work tirelessly at the grassroots level to help Congressman Collins get re-elected, but he did as well. Congressman Collins is a fantastic example of a candidate reaching out to his voters face-to-face in order to build a relationship with his district. His re-election efforts were definitely aided in part by his campaign team's field work as well as his own.

Internet

Although the utilization of the internet as a form of campaign communications is fairly new, it is increasing in importance, especially when reaching out to millennial voters. The internet is extremely useful in helping to educate voters in a way that is most convenient for them. It is much easier to Google a candidate and find out their platform or to click on a campaign advertisement on Facebook than it is to seek out literature or campaign information outside of the internet. The internet provides a "convenient and reliable place for voters to collect information that is often spread across many locations" (Herrnson 2012, p. 245). The internet is also useful to the electorate as it provides voters a way to easily access dates and information about upcoming campaign events as well as, in many cases, it gives them the means to convey their messages to candidates.

The internet is an extremely effective way to motivate and reach out to millennial voters. The internet offers the youth a way to get more involved. "Between blogs, Youtube videos, social network sites, and petition warehouses like Change.org, once can find ample anecdotes supporting the belief that everyday citizens are taking charge of the political agenda like never before" (Karpf 2013, 5). With information at their fingertips, the younger generation can be easily targeted and accessed through internet campaign advertising. As aforementioned, Barack

Obama's utilization of the internet in the 2008 presidential race certainly aided in his percentage of millennial votes. While the internet has successfully advertised for several candidates since then, the internet and its abilities in regards to campaigning and advertising is still growing considerably.

Consider: nearly every US election since 1996 has been labeled "The Year of the Internet." One can identify important milestones at each of them: the first campaign websites in 1996, Jesse Ventura's Internet-fueled 1998 Gubernatorial race, John McCain's 2000 online fundraising prowess, Howard Dean's use of Meetup.com in 2004, Senator George Allen's "Macaca Moment" in 2006, and of course there is the 2008 Obama campaign (Karpf, 2013, 11).

Over the next few election cycles, the usage of the internet in campaigns is surely to expand to heights that no one has ever thought possible. Campaigns will further utilize the Web as a way to garner younger votes as well as educate and mobilize voters in general. A great example of how the internet is already being used to increase voter registration and mobilization is that voters have the ability to register to vote online as well as learn more about political events held in their area. This gives the electorate an easier way to register as well as the chance to have their voices heard by their representatives.

V. Conclusion

The campaign process can seem daunting, expensive, and unimportant to many. But, in reality, campaigns serve to educate and mobilize voters. During the four phases of campaigns, different forms of communications help campaign teams to fulfill their goals of informing potential voters and, then, turning those potential voters into voters on Election Day. It comes as no surprise that the majority of the electorate is not well-informed and feels as if their votes do not matter. If campaigns were to be taken out of the picture, that statement would become emboldened and voters would be far less likely to be informed or to have the desire to get

informed. Campaigns raise pertinent issues and make the electorate ask questions. Campaigns show voters, not only the faces of those that may represent them, but their purpose. Finally, campaigns push those potential voters watching campaign advertisements on television to the polls, where they can truly make a difference and fulfill their civic duty. The education of the electorate is a priority of our nation that cannot be argued. Campaigns continue to aid the democratic system by, not only informing voters, but encouraging them to take part in a right that many around the world do not enjoy: voting.

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