



PRISC April 30 Meeting Minutes

On Monday April 30, 2018 at the Poinciana Library PRISC hosted Dr Bruce Anderson as speaker talking about the 2018 elections. He was joined by Associate Professor Zach Bauman. The meeting was very cordial and attended by an audience representing Poinciana residents from Solivita, Poinciana Villages and surrounding communities.

Dr. Anderson started the meeting by providing a brief overview of his thoughts about the 2018 election. He said he viewed the circumstances surrounding the election as being a bit bizarre. While there is a lot of talk of a 'blue wave' of democrats being swept into office he feels that the 2018 midterm election would be most like other recent midterm elections with perhaps only as little as 5% change in the government make up at the national level.

He explained that his reason for believing this is based on the current makeup of the congressional election districts. While much has changed in terms of the mood of the county since the last election, the district boundaries have not. He said that for partisan races at the national level republican voters tend to show up to elect republicans and democrat voters tend to vote for democrats. He said that while many voters declare themselves to be independent, deep down inside their true beliefs tend to align either with democratic or republican beliefs and they tend to vote that way.

One thing that he said might impact that in the long run could be the current redistricting case before the Supreme Court. He doubted if any decision would be rendered in time to impact the 2018 election. The way he and professor Bauman described the question before the Supreme Court, the argument states that since the court has ruled that election districts could not be drawn up to favor one race over another, the argument states that the same restrictions should be applied to favoring one political party over another. The counter argument states that the constitution leaves it up to the politically elected state legislators to draw the districts and why should not political affiliation be reflected in their decisions? The decision in this case could have a very important influence on future United States elections.

He cited examples where current districts were drawn up to strongly favor one party vs another. The examples cited showed the party voters most likely to vote in a primary election would tend to lean towards the extreme right or extreme left depending on the party, the winners of the primaries within a district tend to be politicians with the more extreme views. They tend to get elected by their majority party in each district and as a result when they are seated in either congress or the senate we end up with partisan gridlock and nothing gets done.

The argument was made that if the districts were forced to be more equally divided between republican and democratic voters then the primary voters would be more encouraged to nominate more centrist candidates who might appeal to the centrists of the other party and hence might win the election? He gave examples of two districts where one was split 55 to 45 between two parties and the other was split 75 to 25. Recognizing the closeness of the split in the first district, the partisan voters might be more likely to select a candidate with the possibility of appealing to some in the other party in order to win the general election. In the district favoring one party over another, the concern about appealing to the center would be less important and the voters might be more adapt to select an extreme candidate.

This led Dr. Anderson to focus on the importance of the primary elections. As defined in Florida the Republicans elect the republican candidates in the primary election and the democrats elect the democratic candidates. The independents don't get to vote. So all too often the party candidates winning the primary tend to be from one extreme or the other. He said the way to solve that problem was to field better and more candidates at the primary level to allow the primary voters to select whether they want candidates to represent their party who are more moderate and receptive to working with the other party to get things done or more radical to continue the gridlock. As an example he cited the current primaries for Florida Governor. On the Republican side there are multiple candidates representing both right wing and middle of the road views. On the democratic side there are both left wing and more center middle of the road candidates. He said that the primary voters would be the ones to decide who should be the candidates for each party. If they fear a competitive race in their district they might tend to vote for a more centrist candidate appealing moderate voters of the other party as opposed to candidates representing the extreme right or left?

Dr. Anderson then apologized for taking up so much time delivering a lecture and opened the meeting up for questions?

Guns in the 2018 election?

What about the impact on the gun issue in the 2018 elections? Dr Anderson stated that the 2nd amendment had been around for a long time and he did not see that changing. What he did say was that while almost everybody agreed that people had the right to own guns there were differences over controls that could be placed upon weapons in the interest of public safety. He said there were differences between the two parties with Republicans on the right arguing for no restrictions on guns and democrats on the left arguing for strong restrictions. He foresaw the impact on the 2018 election becoming decided in the primaries and the general election in that the individual parties will decide in the primaries which candidates they choose to represent them in the general election on gun issues and then all of the voters in the general election would decide the representation they want at the national level. Centrist legislators might tend to reach compromise agreements while right or left wing candidates might lead to more gridlock.

Money in election Campaigns?

The question was asked about the impact of money in election campaigns and decisions? Dr. Anderson stated that while he viewed money as being important in election campaigns as a basic requirement he

did not view the amount of money as being the deciding factor in determining the winner. He cited several examples of the better funded candidate both in national and local elections losing while the better candidate having less money was the winner. He strongly felt that the most important factor in winning elections was the strength of the candidates, not the campaign money spent.

Comments on the 2016 Election

There were several questions leading to comments about the 2016 election. Dr. Anderson summarized by saying that in his opinion Trump won the 2016 election because his campaign was able to capture more electoral votes than his opponent. He stated that this was not the first time in history that an American President was elected without a majority of the votes counted nationwide, the constitution requires the counting of electoral votes and that is the way things work. He said that what the Trump campaign did was strike a nerve of dissatisfaction across the electorate appealing to several groups such as West Virginia Coal miners, Midwest factory workers, farmers etc that felt their interest would be better served by voting for him. He also said that many votes were cast not because of the candidates themselves but because of the issues such as abortion and gun control. He also said that messaging from the candidates and campaigns had a lot to do with the outcome. He felt that Trump portrayed a simple consistent message while his opponent was viewed as giving different messages to different groups causing the image of inductiveness. Specifically regarding the issues such as Facebook, Cambridge Analytica, Russian Influence and others that while they had an impact on the election they were not the deciding factors. His conclusion was that in the end more voters in more states with more electoral votes simply chose one candidate over the other.

Regarding the future his view was calm and upbeat. He stated that over American history we have had many controversies after elections because of who was elected but because the system is good and strong the country has survived and made itself better. Particularly on the question of divisiveness and difference of opinion he stated that those issues have been with America since the early colonial days. He stated that within his classes from the day kids enter as freshmen until the day they graduate as seniors they encourage debate and discussion of the issues. His view is that is what makes our country strong.

PRFSC wants to thank Dr. Anderson and Professor Bauman for coming to Poinciana to share their thoughts with our community.