



Bruce Anderson Meeting Minutes

On Tuesday Sept 10, 2019 PRFSC hosted Professor Bruce Anderson as guest speaker talking on Political interests of the community for the upcoming election



Doctors Bruce Anderson and Zachary Bauman, Florida Southern Political Science Professors

Electoral College

The first major political issue discussed was the electoral college. Certain members of the audience expressed the desire to have it abolished. Others said they preferred to keep it.

Professor Anderson stated that the Electoral College was part of the constitution and that it would take a constitutional amendment approved by two thirds votes in the house and the senate plus 38 of the fifty states. In other words it is not going to happen easily.

Professor Anderson stated that he thought the electoral college was a good thing. His reason was that if the presidential elections were decided by popular vote the campaigns would only pay attention to the voters in the most populous cities and states and not the rest of the country. Professor Anderson teaches political science courses describing the difference between the electorates of the individual states. He says that without the electoral college the campaigns would only focus on the needs of the larger states and not the smaller states.

Issues that decide elections

Much of the evening discussion focused on elections and the types of decisions that voters looked at to make their decisions as to who to vote for? He said that the issues vary across geographies and times but in any given election people will vote for the candidates who they

feel represent the issues they feel most strongly about. Abortion for example. A candidate may be the most despicable candidate to ever run in an election but if abortion was a major issue for the voter then they will most often overlook the candidate flaws and vote for the candidate who's abortion views aligned with the voter.

Gun Control or gun rights was identified as another hot button issue. The candidate's position on gun laws might often cause a voter to overlook flaws in the candidate and vote for them anyway.

Depending on the election year the economy may be a hot button issue. If people are out of work or unable to pay their bills because the size of their paychecks do not keep up with the cost of living the economy may cause a voter to elect one candidate over another. If times are good and the voters feel good about the economy they may elect another candidate. War, taxes or size of government might be campaign issues that decide elections.

Last but not least political party may be a deciding factor Some people will always vote one party regardless of the candidate.

Professor Anderson stated that in most cases the winning candidate was the one who aligned themselves with the political issues within the district the election was being held in. That is where the voting districts and the states come into play. A candidate running in a district election needs to align with the voting priorities of the voting majority within the district. A candidate running statewide needs to align with the voting priorities of the state.

Money and Lobbying in an election

Questions were raised about the influence of Lobbyists and campaign money in elections. Professor Anderson admitted that lobbyists were able to gain influence on candidates and the issues that the candidates support based on financial contributions. What Professor Anderson said was that at the end of the day it was not the money from lobbyists and political action campaigns that voted to select the election winners but the voters themselves. As described above there are multiple ways that candidates can align themselves with issues that help to determine whether voters will vote for a candidate or not? The additional money can help to increase voter awareness of the candidate's name and where the candidate stands on the issues but at the end of the day it is the voters who decide the winners of the elections.

Term limits

The topic of term limits was discussed. Professor Anderson admitted that in any election the incumbent office holder has an advantage over the challenger. He qualified that by saying that

the incumbent was tied to the record and that if the voters were not pleased with the way the incumbent had performed in office then that could be a disadvantage to the incumbent.

Professor Anderson stated that he personally thought that term limits were not a good thing. He said that accomplishing things in government by passing of laws and budgets was not an easy thing to do. He said that like any business or profession there was a learning curve required and it took time to learn how government actually works and about the issues that need to be addressed. He said that in his opinion all too often term limits caused elected politicians to be forced out of office just as they were starting to become effective. He said that throughout history there were many examples where some really bad office holders were able to remain in office for too long because of no term limits but he blamed the voters for allowing them to remain in office.

Political parties

There was much discussion about the impact of political parties on the outcome of elections. Arguments were made that the closed primary system where only registered members of a political party could vote in an election restricted independents from having a voice on who the candidates selected to represent each party could be. The counter argument made was that without party restrictions in voting that it would be too easy for non party voters to sabotage the candidate representing a party by selecting a bad candidate to represent the party. Both arguments held validity.

The other topic of discussion centered on the threat of political party primary opposition to candidates who do not support policies supported by the parties. An example was gun control. Again Professor Anderson said that the effectiveness of primary threats could only be possible if a majority of the party voters within an election supported either the incumbent bucking the position of the party or the challenger taking on the incumbent. He said it would be up to the voters to decide for the candidate elected to represent their district whether they supported the views of the incumbent or the challenger.

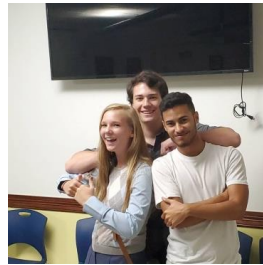
Trump in the 2020 Election

Among the most interesting comments offered by Professor Anderson during the evening were his thoughts of President Trump in the 2020 election. He referred back to much of the discussion earlier in the meeting when he stated he thought President Trump would probably win the election. He cited the past history of past presidents running for a second term who were either reelected or not reelected.

He said that sitting presidents have vast powers to direct the national agenda. He cited the example of the economy. He said that if in the eyes of the voters if the economy remained

strong the president could continue to tout the economy. He said that if the economy started to become a liability the president had the ability to change the subject to say war with either Iran or Iraq for example. He said in addition if the voters felt that in spite of his shortcomings from a personal viewpoint if the president delivered on the issues that mattered to the voters, abortion for example, the supreme court etc the voters would hold their nose and probably vote for him anyway. Unless a strong challenger appeared who would take an opposing view more popular with a majority of the voters

Gun Control



Florida Southern Political Science students attending the meeting

A good portion of the meeting focused on a discussion of gun control. There were many attendees who felt strongly that the issue needed to be addressed. There were others who were vocal supporting the right to bear arms. Professor Anderson cautioned that whatever types of controls proposed had to be declared to be constitutional.

The topic really hit close to home when the three students were asked to inject their views into the discussion.

The three students each described their political backgrounds and personal feelings about the right to bear arms. They each expressed different opinions.

What they did agree on however was the frustration that today's students have with the lack of political will that their older generations have to come up with a solution. They stated that it has been 20 years since the Columbine school massacre and that more recently the problem seems to have gotten worse. They said the today's students feel like ducks in a shooting gallery in that the only solution being offered is to have students hide in closets. Other attendees in the meeting pointed out that this frustration was not unique to the students in today's society but was in fact spreading with the same fear now being shared by shoppers in stores, people attending churches and everywhere in society. They expressed absolute frustration with the lack of political will on the part of elected leaders to do anything about the problem.

They did not suggest any single solution. Their frustration was stated to be with the lack of any political will to propose any solution other than thoughts and prayers after each incident. They said thoughts and prayer were nice but not solving the problem.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with the agreement that after everything that had been discussed nothing could be done to address the multitude of problems facing the nation until the voters decided that they had had enough and demanded action from their elected leaders. Kind of like everybody having to look into the mirror and recognize that the problems could not be solved unless they decided to do something about solving them.

PRFSC would like to thank Professors Anderson and Bauman along with their students from traveling from Lakeland to share their political insight with the Poinciana community.