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increasing polarization of the two major parties. Much of the evidence for and discussion of the increasing partisanship of Democrats and Republicans, however, is concentrated on the federal level, especially on Congress, where bipartisanship has faded with the shrinking numbers of moderates from both sides of the aisle. Yet scholars of state politics are also intensely interested in the development and direction of political parties and their associated interest groups, and by employing the comparative method they have uncovered some fascinating insights about the polarized stances of political parties.

Indeed, the research discussed below suggests that if we want to know why political parties and interest groups are the way they are, polarized or not, we need a deeper understanding of what is happening outside government, especially at the local level. It is increasingly what happens there—especially in terms of interest group activity—that ultimately determines not just levels of partisanship but the very definition of what a political party is.

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- **Masket, Seth.** *No Middle Ground: How Informal Party Organizations Control Nominations and Polarize Legislatures.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

In this provocative book, Masket, a political scientist at the University of Denver, takes a sustained look at what political parties are and what has caused the increasing partisanship in American politics. Traditionally, political scientists have viewed political parties as products of politicians. The basic argument is that political elites create formal organizations (i.e., political parties) to help them gain office, run government, and pursue particular sets of policies. Masket turns conventional wisdom on its head. Rather than centralized and hierarchical organizations, he argues, political parties, at least in the contemporary world, are characterized by what he terms informal party organizations (IPOs). These organizations, loose affiliations of individuals and interest groups, have enormous influence over primary elections. If elected officials—be they state legislators or members of Congress—want to keep their jobs, they need the support of these IPOs. This is because IPOs have the resources to mobilize enough voters to decide

who wins in low-turnout primaries. This ends up distorting democratic representation. IPOs often have more extremely partisan viewpoints than do members of the general electorate, but an elected official who moderates his or her views once in office runs the risk of not making it through the next primary. Thus, politicians end up being creatures of (informal) political parties, rather than the other way around.

- **Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller.** “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (2012): 571–597.

This article picks up on and develops a number of the ideas expressed in Masket’s *No Middle Ground*. The central argument is that interest groups and activists are now the key actors in shaping political parties. Rather than political parties being tools of elected officials to help them win and keep office, parties are now dominated by interest groups and activists—essentially, the IPOs described in Masket’s book—who are less interested in the preferences of voters than in their own narrow agendas. These groups focus their efforts on controlling the nomination process—that is, primary elections. This control provides them the whip they need to keep elected officials focused on narrow rather than general interests.

- **Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes.** “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (2012): 405–431.

Examining survey data over the past 40 years, the authors find an increasing level of hostility among partisans toward the other party. In 2008, for example, the average rating of the “out-party” was just above 30—a much lower rate of approval than the average rating of Catholics by Protestants, “big business” by Democrats, or homosexuals or people on welfare by Republicans. “Both Republicans and Democrats increasingly dislike, even loathe, their political opponents,” the authors conclude. That makes governing difficult, since partisans are unlikely to trust the policies or even the facts presented by members of the other party. The reason isn’t so much ideological differences