CASE STUDY

The Revival of the Nevada Democratic Party

When a state political party's electoral performance falters, how should political actors change its fortunes for the better—concentrate on the needs of individual candidates, bolster allied outside groups, or invest in the formal party itself?

Sam Rosenfeld
Daniel Schlozman

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SNF Agora Case Studies

The SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University offers a series of case studies that show how civic and political actors navigated real-life challenges related to democracy. Practitioners, teachers, organizational leaders, and trainers working with civic and political leaders, students, and trainees can use our case studies to deepen their skills, to develop insights about how to approach strategic choices and dilemmas, and to get to know each other better and work more effectively.

How to Use the Case

Unlike many case studies, ours do not focus on individual leaders or other decision-makers. Instead, the SNF Agora case studies are about choices that groups make collectively. Therefore, these cases work well as prompts for group discussions. The basic question in each case is: "What would we do?"

After reading a case, some groups role-play the people who were actually involved in the situation, treating the discussion as a simulation. In other groups, the participants speak as themselves, discussing the strategies that they would advocate for the group described in the case. The person who assigns or organizes your discussion may want you to use the case in one of those ways.

When studying and discussing the choices made by real-life decision-makers (often under intense pressure), it is appropriate to exhibit some humility. You do not know as much about their communities and circumstances as they did, and you do not face the same risks. If you had the opportunity to meet these individuals, it might not be your place to give them advice. We are not asking you to second-guess their actual decisions as if you were wiser than they were.

However, you can exhibit appropriate respect for these decision-makers while also thinking hard about the possible choices that they could have made, weighing the pros and cons of each option, and seriously considering whether they made the best choices or should have acted differently. That is a powerful way of learning from their experience. Often the people described in our cases had reflected on previous examples, just as you can do by thinking about their situation.

This case study is appropriate for:

- College and graduate students
- Practitioners in electoral and party politics
- Movement and issue activists
- Political reformers

Keywords: Campaign finance law, candidate-centered, electoral revival, formal party organization, para-party network, party nominations

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About the Authors

Sam Rosenfeld is an associate professor of political science at Colgate University and the author of *The Polarizers: Postwar Architects of Our Partisan Era* (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

Daniel Schlozman is Joseph and Bertha Bernstein Associate Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *When Movements Anchor Parties: Electoral Alignments in American History* (Princeton, 2015).

Introduction

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO REVIVE A POLITICAL PARTY? The question matters not only to politicians and party officials, but to activists, social movements, interest groups—and, indeed, to the millions of Americans who stand to lose or gain from the high-stakes changes in policy that come about from electoral shifts in party power. Party revival takes on additional urgency in an era when so many party organizations at the local and state level have atrophied and declined.

The situation discussed in this case stands out in stark relief against that broader trend. Over the last two decades, Nevada's state Democratic Party has seen dramatic organizational revival and major, sustained electoral gains. Much of this was done at the hands of a network of operatives and activists initially hired by Senator Harry Reid, who collectively earned for the state party an informal moniker in state and national commentary: "the Reid machine." How was this turnaround achieved? What lessons from the Silver State might be relevant to political actors elsewhere? Through conversations with party staffers, Democratic operatives, and labor activists in the state, we sought to learn more. And what we found, we contend, bears relevance to Democratic and Republican activists alike, across the country and at all levels of government.

In contemporary American politics, actors who seek to revive a party's electoral fortunes face a choice among multiple possible paths.

In contemporary American politics, actors who seek to revive a party's electoral fortunes face a choice among multiple possible paths. One approach centers on individual office-seekers, building up the campaign resources of particular candidates and addressing their particular needs. Two other paths take a more collective approach. Activists can either invest effort and money into improving the formal party organization itself, or, alternatively, they can channel their investments towards outside groups allied with the party—what we refer to as the "para-party network." Each approach involves its own challenges, benefits, and trade-offs, and each is influenced significantly by state and federal laws governing campaign financing and activity. While this case tells Nevada Democrats' story, both major American parties confront similar strategic choices in states and localities all over the country, and the decisions activists make matter not only for their own communities but for the health of American democracy.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this case study, you should be able to:

1. Appreciate the strategic paths that political actors may take to bring about collective electoral gains for a party.
2. Understand the distinction between *candidate-centered* and *collective* electoral efforts, and between formal and informal party organizations.
3. Delineate how law and party procedures shape the electoral strategies that actors pursue in the name of party revival.

Case narrative

On November 5, 2002, Nevada Democrats hit bottom. In that day's midterm elections, they lost every single statewide race, lost seats in the state assembly, lost the race for the state's newly created third U.S. congressional district—lost seemingly everywhere. The results culminated a long decline for the Democratic Party in the Silver State. By 2002, the formal state party had a skeletal staff and little electoral operation to speak of. The broader terrain of Democratic activism in the state was fragmented across disparate candidate operations, consultancies, and activist groups. Whether in or out of power, Democrats had no cohesive voice or identity. For the party's fortunes to reverse, many began to suspect, something more would need to happen than merely waiting for demographic change or fortuitous events.

The 2002 midterms had proved a historically rare instance in which the opposition party at the federal level actually lost seats in Congress.

For one prominent state Democrat in particular—the state's senior U.S. senator and number-two party leader in the chamber's Democratic caucus, Harry Reid—the ebbing Democratic tide in the state posed an acutely personal danger. Having won reelection in 1998 by a microscopic 400-vote margin, Reid wanted to put himself in a stronger position to retain his seat in 2004. It was a moment of soul-searching and electoral rebuilding for the party across the country. The 2002 midterms had proved a historically rare instance in which the opposition party at the federal level, the Democrats, actually lost seats in Congress. But in the Silver State, Democrats would pursue revitalization under the leadership of a U.S. senator with an unusually keen interest in the nuts and bolts of political organization.

The question was, how do you revive a state party? Three major alternative paths stood out: a candidate-centered approach, para-party network-building, or formal party revival. Each path offered distinct advantages and disadvantages.

Harry Reid was hardly the only Democrat in the aftermath of 2002 who might have opted to concentrate on his own campaign operation to bolster his electoral prospects, letting others fend for themselves. The American political system, characterized by single-member districts in which office-holders represent geographically defined and distinct constituencies, has an in-built tendency to foster candidate-centered politics, in which office-seekers take the lead in funding and organizing their own electoral efforts. Individual candidates and the operatives working for them will often know best what specific messages and particular campaign activities will resonate with their electorate.[1] In addition, many candidates benefit from the ability to distance themselves from a broader association with the national party and its brand. This dynamic was particularly acute for Nevada Democrats by the early twenty-first century. Beginning with Ronald Reagan's popular presidency in the 1980s, Republicans had made steady and substantial gains in registration and electoral support in the state, while traditionally moderate and conservative Democrats came to suffer from the national party's culturally liberal reputation.[2]

Since the 1970s, political groups outside formal parties have proliferated, taking a variety of legal forms and organizational structures.

But the same advantages to individual contenders that candidate-centered politics offers may be revealed as disadvantages in the aggregate. Atomized candidate operations can produce duplicative and redundant activities and expenditures as different candidates each reinvent the wheel. The upshot is to deplete the collective good that parties can offer through a shared message and a coherent agenda in power. By 2002, these accumulated tendencies had taken their toll on Nevada Democrats, who were "hampered by internecine fighting and embarrassing Balkanization of campaigns and players," in the words of the *Las Vegas Sun*.[3] Even if Harry Reid's primary motivation was ensuring his own electoral success in 2004, in other words, he had good reason to consider a more collective strategy for Nevada's Democratic revival.

Para-party network-building offered one such collective strategy—and it was an approach that had come to predominate across American politics. Since the 1970s, political groups outside formal parties have proliferated, taking a variety of legal forms and organizational structures. Campaign finance regulation has helped to foster the rise of such groups. Federal law since the 1970s, along with a variety of additional state-level restrictions, have placed caps on the amount of money that donors can give to party organizations and candidates for office and that parties can give directly to candidates. Outside this regulatory zone, however, lies the world of unrestricted funding for satellite

entities engaged in "independent-expenditure-only" campaigns. Both at the state and federal level, political actors have frequently chosen to launch and support such para-party entities as the linchpin of electoral revival, letting the relevant state party organizations languish.

Given the incentives created by American campaign finance regulations, the advantages of the para-party path are straightforward. Outside groups can raise huge, unrestricted amounts of money and spend it as they see fit.[i] Nevada operatives who have worked both in the state party and with independent expenditure outfits describe "IE" efforts as a useful way of bringing outside money into state politics as well as an effective vehicle for running issue campaigns. By the start of the 2000s, moreover, the landscape of interest-group politics in the state was changing in ways that offered potential new opportunities for Democratic Party partnership. Most notably, a decade's worth of major organizing campaigns in Las Vegas's booming casinos had grown the Culinary Workers Union into a large and politically formidable organization, joining the state's traditional interest-group power centers in gaming, mining, and real estate.[4] By coordinating informally as a network, such groups could boost Democratic politicians' collective electoral fortunes.[5]

One Nevada Democratic operative used the term "warlords" to describe the fragmented array of interests, politicians, and consultants.

Effective coordination within a jostling, headless network of groups is easier said than done, however. One Nevada Democratic operative used the term "warlords" to describe the fragmented array of interests, politicians, and consultants—working independently and sometimes at cross-purposes—that comprised state Democratic politics as of 2002.[6] Even if such coordination problems could be solved, Nevada Democrats faced challenges, including lagging registration numbers and a disaffected base, that para-party entities were ill-suited to meet. Independent expenditure campaigns typically focus on advertising and messaging. They tend to neglect recruiting and training candidates and organizing in the field. For some of the same reasons, independent expenditure operations "aren't as much volunteer-driven," as a Nevada operative told us. "The party really is the

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i The possibilities of party revival through tightly coordinated para-party expenditures are evident in another western state. Colorado, which imposes particularly strict legal limitations on contributions to parties, has seen a well-publicized Democratic electoral rebound in the twenty-first century. The architects of that revival—initially, in the early 2000s, four megadonors known in state circles as "the Four Horsemen"—have pursued a fully privatized para-party approach, funding an ever-shifting array of independent expenditure entities and focusing relentlessly on keeping all members of the network coordinated and free of conflict. One of the four horsemen, Jared Polis, was elected governor in 2018. See Adam Schranger and Rob Witwer, *The Blueprint: How the Democrats Won Colorado (and Why Republicans Everywhere Should Care)* (Golden, Col.: Fulcrum Publishing, 2010); Meaghan Winter, *All Politics is Local: Why Progressives Must Fight for the States* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2019), 79-108.

apparatus for bringing in that volunteer structure. . . .”[7] IE-dominated political operations tend to be top-down, lacking the grassroots connections and civic rootedness retained even by sleepy formal party organizations.

Another option to tackle Nevada Democrats’ collective electoral challenge engaged directly at that grassroots level. That option was to pursue partisan gain via formal party revitalization—investing time and money into building out the party organization and professionalizing its staff. That so few state parties had made such attempts was striking testament both to the impact of campaign finance incentives and the general unpopularity of parties themselves. But at the very least, formal party renewal appeared as a potentially feasible path for Nevada Democrats given the state’s comparatively loose state-level campaign finance laws, which allow for unlimited contributions to party committees.

A well-resourced and staffed formal party organization that stays active through off years would offer an array of distinct benefits.

A well-resourced and staffed formal party organization that stays active through off years would offer an array of distinct benefits. A large permanent staff, including full-time positions in areas like field and opposition research, would enable party actors to operate with longer time horizons. Keeping tasks like voter registration and the maintenance of a datafile in-house would skirt the redundancies and coordination problems endemic to the blob-like para-party networks. And a formal party is distinctly suited to mobilizing volunteer (as opposed to professional) activism. An active formal party could also attract and incubate professional talent. “If you have a full-time party operation churning every year of every cycle,” a former Reid aide told us, “you have a place for good operatives to go.”[8] That emphasis on talent might foster a virtuous circle of competence and professional ambition that compounds over time, offering a stark contrast to the mediocrity that so often characterizes state and local party organizations.[9] Finally, a robust party providing effective services to candidates, having built credibility and legitimacy through such work, would arguably have the clout to pursue potentially contentious tasks like candidate recruitment and active involvement in nominating decisions.[ii]

But pursuing formal party revival would entail costs as well. The electoral needs of Democratic office-seekers in Nevada were pressing and urgent; rebuilding the state party would be a long-term investment with delayed payoffs. And given the atrophied and indebted state of the organization as of 2002, that investment, in labor and money, would need to be formidable. “They didn’t have a

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ii This is not, to be clear, a universally accepted contention. We elaborate our views on parties’ role in nominating decisions in Daniel Schlozman and Sam Rosenfeld, “The Hollow Parties,” in *Can America Govern Itself?*, eds. Frances E. Lee and Nolan McCarty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 133-134, 140-141.

When parties overrule powerful actors inside their coalitions, the losers blame the party, and may refuse further cooperation.

voter file," recalled one state party operative, referring to a database of registered voters that can enable electoral targeting. "How you run a statewide race and not have good data is beyond me."[10] The skeletal staff of two, another operative told us, "did nothing to reach new people at all."[11] Even if Reid and his allies did succeed in building out the party, a strong party in an anti-party age engaging in tasks like candidate recruitment and intervention in nominating contests would unavoidably ruffle feathers and engender enemies. When parties overrule powerful actors inside their coalitions, the losers blame the party, and may refuse further cooperation.

What Would You Do?

Nevada Democrats faced a decision after the 2002 elections. They could pursue a strategy of electoral revival oriented around tending to the distinct needs of individual candidates, starting with Harry Reid himself and, through the senator's fundraising largesse, extending to other candidates. But they recognized than such an individualized approach might only deepen the Nevada Democratic Party's collective predicament. They could opt to build up a coordinated state network of independent-expenditure groups operating on behalf of Democratic candidates, working in conjunction with party-aligned interest groups like organized labor. But that would be unlikely to address ground-level challenges the party faced statewide, such as lagging party registration and a depleted volunteer corps. Finally, they could pursue the increasingly rare-in-the United States path of expanding and professionalizing the formal Nevada State Democratic Party organization. But such party-building had high upfront costs, and uncertain payoffs.

Consider the following questions as you discuss this case:

- If you were to decide to pursue a strategy of formal party revival, what, if anything, might you be sacrificing by focusing on investments into the party organization?
- How much intervention by party leaders into the candidate selection process—including primary contests—would you consider to be either legitimate or desirable?
- How might different state-level campaign finance regimes influence your choice of strategy for electoral revival?
- What are the normative or ethical implications of these choices? Does a particular path seem to you to lead, ultimately, to a better political system and potentially better policy outcomes? Does an alternative path seem to threaten that political system?

How It Turned Out

Beginning in 2003, Nevada Democrats, under the leadership of Harry Reid, opted to go the route of formal party revival. Though Reid had a personal motivation for making new political investments in the state, that incentive hardly guaranteed a broader effort to improve the formal state party. But for Reid, not only his own fortunes but those of current and future allies in the state stood to improve if the party organization was pulled out of the doldrums. And so he and a network of aides and operatives embarked on a project of professionalizing and growing the formal state party as the central institutional actor in Nevada Democratic politics.

Party revitalization requires many things—and in the context of American politics, money is unavoidably one of them.

Party revitalization requires many things—and in the context of American politics, money is unavoidably one of them. Reid made a sustained commitment to using his own fundraising resources to channel both in- and out-of-state contributions into the formal party. Those resources would only grow more formidable following his ascension to the position of Senate Democratic leader in 2005, which made him a preeminent magnet for financial contributions from donor networks and interest groups across the country. Reid directed many such donors toward the Silver State's Democratic Party coffers. In the ensuing years, the party used this largesse not only to professionalize and grow its staff and field operations but also to fund aggressive and continuous "coordinated campaigns" (legal campaigns arranged under the party umbrella that pool contributions and share resources from various candidate operations with specific candidates in local and state races) promulgating shared Democratic messages and attacks on Republicans.

Beyond keeping the money spigot flowing, Reid took virtually direct control of the party apparatus. Though careful not to directly remove or antagonize long-serving staffers in the existing, skeletal organization, Reid brought in additional layers of new operatives and built out the office. The party's permanent staff grew from two in 2002[12] to 20 in 2020. His most important move was to hire Rebecca Lambe, a veteran of Missouri Democratic politics, as the party's executive director in 2003. Lambe's tenure became legendary for the energy she poured into building the party organization, recruiting candidates up and down the ticket, and moving early and aggressively with coordinated campaigns. Once Lambe moved out of the executive director position, she continued as Reid's top political adviser in Nevada as well as the central operative in state Democratic politics for years to come. That trajectory reflected a broader template. Between 2003 and 2016, many state party operatives started with positions in Reid's Senate office before moving first to the state party itself, then into the extended constellation of consultants, advocacy groups, and independent expenditure operations in Nevada.

This trajectory helps to underscore that Nevada's Democratic revival is hardly solely a story of reviving the formal party organization. Indeed, outside of the Reid network itself, the party has benefitted enormously from the now-57,000-strong Culinary Workers Union. But the formal party has served as the hub for Democratic efforts in Nevada much more than is typical elsewhere. This was the result of years of work by operatives who, as one of them put it to us, "knew that parties could be much more than what they had become."[13]

Continual investment and activity not just during election cycles but between them have defined Nevada Democrats' approach in the era of the Reid machine. Early investment to grow and professionalize the staff, to target local offices for electing Democrats as a way of building a bench of party candidates, and to develop a central voter file all served to create a lasting infrastructure that campaigns can draw on to scale up efforts quickly and repeatedly. The party's in-house operations in both research and field work allows for continuous, integrated campaign work while also broadening operatives' time horizons beyond immediate tasks at hand. It also means that the party is able to pursue continual, well-targeted voter registration efforts itself rather than relying on the efforts of non-profit 501(c) organizations to do it.

Such party projects helped to turn a 7,000-voter registration deficit with the Republicans in 2002 into a 109,000-voter advantage in 2020.

Reid's successful lobbying effort to get the national party to schedule the Nevada caucus as the third Democratic nominating contest in the nation starting in 2008, which raised both the importance and the participation levels of the event dramatically, proved to be a particularly valuable tool for the state party's voter registration program. "It's an organizing opportunity," according to a party operative. "You're drilling down precinct by precinct [in] a process only open to Democrats."[14] Such party projects helped to turn a 7,000-voter registration deficit with the Republicans in 2002 into a 109,000-voter advantage in 2020.[15]

In contrast to a candidate-centered model, in which party organizations provide services to office-seekers but foreswear influence over the field, the Reid-era state party has not shied away from exerting control over nominations and campaigns. The party has aggressively recruited candidates for offices at all levels and, when they deemed it necessary, intervened to discourage candidates they considered weak from running and to prevent contested primaries that they thought would divide the party and drain support from the ultimate nominees. The "Reid machine" earned its moniker—and ruffled feathers from aspirants who didn't win the party's favor. Even among many who believe that party officials have a legitimate role to play in channeling party support to particular contenders and not others, a recurring critique emphasized the Reid machine's heavy-handedness and aversion to real primary contests.

All of this is what Nevada Democrats have done since 2003. How has it turned out, electorally speaking? The answer is unambiguous. After the bloodbath of the 2002 losses and John Kerry's

defeat in 2004 (Reid won reelection that year against a weak opponent), the party saw gains in statewide races in 2006 and a major breakthrough in 2008. Barack Obama won the state by 12 points that year, while Democrats captured control of the state Senate and expanded their numbers in the Assembly to a veto-proof majority. Two years later, against powerfully adverse national partisan winds, Harry Reid himself managed to beat polling expectations by eight points to win resounding reelection.[16] By 2016, Democrats reeling from shocking electoral losses across the country could look at Nevada—which boasted a win for Hillary Clinton, Democratic gains in the Assembly, two flipped U.S. House seats, and a flipped U.S. Senate seat—and behold the long-term fruits of determined party-building. The good tidings would continue in 2018, when state Democrats won unified control of the governorship and both legislative chambers for the first time in over a quarter-century. In 2020, the Covid pandemic not only devastated the economy of Democrats' political stronghold in the state, Las Vegas, but also struck directly at the party's bread-and-butter strength in face-to-face voter mobilization. The party's victories were narrower that year than in recent cycles, but it sustained its control over state government and garnered a win for Joe Biden in the presidential election.

> All of this is what Nevada Democrats have done since 2003. How has it turned out, electorally speaking? The answer is unambiguous.

To be sure, demographic change in the state—particularly the rapid population growth and increasing ethnic diversity of the Las Vegas metro area—have contributed to rising Democratic fortunes over these years. But Nevada's story goes beyond demographics alone. The state's elections have overproduced for Democrats relative to what its ethnic, racial, and residential mix would predict. In a contemporary political context typified by sclerotic state party organizations and blob-like outside groups doing parties' work for them, the Nevada Democratic Party stands apart.

Epilogue

Whether it will continue to do so is a question that has taken on a new urgency in 2021. In a dramatic coda to this story of party revival, insurgent electoral victories within the party's central committee in March of that year marked the effective end of the Reid machine's control over the formal Democratic apparatus. Supporters of Bernie Sanders, inspired to organize long-term in the state following the bruising fight over delegate allocation at the 2016 state party convention, pursued a multiyear strategy through the Las Vegas Democratic Socialists of America chapter to gain offices within the state Democratic Party. A year after winning a resounding victory for Sanders in the

2020 nominating caucus, these same forces swept the elections for party officers in the state. In response, the state party's existing staff, from its executive director on down, quit en masse. One former Reid operative channeled the establishment's dismissive view of the insurgents' acumen and party legitimacy to a reporter: "These folks have been plotting against the state party and what they perceive as this power structure for the better part of four years." Now that they have control of the party, "I don't think they know what they're doing."[17]

There is a deep irony to this recent upheaval—one that casts the Reid machine actors' response in a harsh light while also paying backhanded compliment to their lasting achievement. On the one hand, the very same actors who bucked contemporary trends in party politics to build up their state's formal party organization now dismiss the relevance of that very organization. As one establishment ally insisted to a reporter after the election, the Reid machine consists of "operatives, volunteers, fundraising, and organizing capacity, all of which can be accomplished outside of the state party organization. . . . Unfortunately, there's no real choice but to work around the party."[18] On the other hand, the Sanders-aligned insurgents put in years of spadework to grow their strength inside the formal party and ultimately win control. "By no means was it inevitable—it was a concerted organizing effort," said Keenen Korth, an organizer in the Sanders wing, "but we knew what the rules of the game were, and we played by it accordingly."[19] They clearly thought that the work was worth it to seize the prize.

Notes

1 See Brian Arbour, *Candidate-Centered Campaigns: Political Messages, Winning Personalities, and Personal Appeals* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

2 Michael W. Bowers, *The Sagebrush State: Nevada's History, Government, and Politics* 5th ed. (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2018), 57-58.

3 "Intrigue, High Stakes Define Races," *Las Vegas Sun*, May 21, 2004, https://lasvegassun.com/news/2004/may/21/intrigue-high-stakes-define-races/.

4 Steven Greenhouse, *Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 33-45; Ruben J. Garcia, "Politically Engaged Unionism: The Culinary Workers in Las Vegas," in *The Cambridge Handbook of U.S. Labor Law for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Richard Bales and Charlotte Garden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 373-380.

5 For this view of political parties, see Richard Skinner, Seth Masket, and David Dulio, "527 Committees, Formal Parties, and Party Adaptation," *The Forum* 11 (2013): 137-156 and, more generally, Kathleen Bawn, Marty Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, "A Theory of Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (2012): 571-597.

6 The operative was Billy Vassiliadis, quoted in David McGrath-Schwartz, "Rebecca Lambe: The force behind Democrats' state success," *Las Vegas Sun*, August 9, 2009, https://lasvegassun.com/news/2009/aug/09/rebecca-lambe-force-behind-state-democrats-success/.

7 Interview by authors, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 11, 2019.

8 Interview by authors, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 11, 2019.

9 For contemporary examples of the latter, see Lara Putnam, "Middle America Reboots Democracy: The Emergence and Rapid Electoral Turn of the New Grassroots," in *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Politics, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*, eds. Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 181-184.

10 Interview by authors, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 11, 2019.

11 Interview by authors, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 11, 2019.

12 McGrath-Schwartz, "Rebecca Lambe: The force behind Democrats' state success."

13 Interview by authors, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 11, 2019.

14 Telephone interview by author, December 16, 2019.

15 Data taken from the Nevada Secretary of State website, at https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/elections/voters/voter-registration-statistics.

16 Matt Barreto, "Proving the exit polls wrong—Harry Reid did win over 90 percent of the Latino vote," Latino Decisions, November 15, 2010, https://latinodecisions.com/blog/proving-the-exit-polls-wrong-harry-reid-did-win-over-90-of-the-latino-vote/.

17 Holly Otterbein, "Pro-Sanders forces finally get their revenge," *Politico*, March 10, 2021, https://www.politico.com/news/2021/03/10/bernie-sanders-nevada-harry-reid-474971.

18 Rory Appleton, "Whitmer picked to lead Nevada in major power shift," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 6, 2021, https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/nevada/whitmer-picked-to-lead-nevada-democrats-in-major-power-shift-2296277/.

19 Transcript, "Bernie Backers Took Over the Democratic Party. The Old Guard Walked Out," *Deconstructed* podcast, March 8, 2021, https://theintercept.com/2021/03/08/deconstructed-nevada-democrats-progressives-vs-establishment/.

Teacher's Guide

This case is appropriate for college and graduate students, political professionals, social movement activists, and issue advocates interested in affecting electoral politics to achieve goals in power.

Key terms include:

- formal party organization
- para-party network
- candidate-centered
- campaign finance law
- electoral revival
- party nominations

Key questions raised include:

- What is lost and what is gained by pursuing collective, party-level investments and electoral strategies rather than individual, candidate-level efforts?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing party revival through investment in formal party organizations? What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing so through informal para-party groups?
- How do state and federal-level campaign finance regulations influence actors' choices of strategy for electoral revival?
- How much power and involvement should parties take in nomination contests, electoral mobilization, and agenda-setting?

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