CONGRESSIONAL DELIBERATION AND MEDIA COVERAGE

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Section 1: The Importance of Congressional Deliberation

In season two of the television series The West Wing communications director Toby Ziegler tries to convince his ex-wife (Congresswoman Wyatt) to encourage the liberal Democrats to work with President Bartlett to develop a solution to the Social Security problem. His ex-wife was reluctant to oblige with his request to help gain support for the commission the President had announced during the State of the Union. She commented that many in Congress didn’t appreciate the President’s effort to “control and keep private” the discussion of how to fix Social Security. Becoming frustrated with the direction of the conversation Toby exclaimed in exasperation, “We want to consider everything but we can’t consider anything.... because you can’t solve Social Security and ask people to run for election at the same time, so why not give politicians some cloud cover and let them be lawmakers for a while? Fifteen people in a room with the door closed- seven Democrats, seven Republicans, and the President of the United States who will not have a vote and they walk out of that room with one voice and make a recommendation to the American people. And nobody knows who was where. The only way it’s going to happen is in secret.”¹ The response Toby gave to his ex-wife speaks to the heart of one of the main impediments facing Congress today- the inability for our

Congressional leaders to have honest, low risk, and open deliberation to solve our country’s most pressing problems.

When the United States Constitution was written in 1787 the founders were trying to correct many of the inadequacies that prevented the first government, the Articles of Confederation, to govern effectively. One of the greatest inadequacies of the Articles of Confederation and the state governments were their inability to effectively lead the people because they lacked the ability to have safe, open, and consistent deliberation. As a result, when designing the new government under the American Constitution the founders aimed to create a government that would be able to respond to the problems and issues facing the country while not being wholly tied to the public nor free from accountability to them. They hoped to achieve this by ensuring representatives in the legislature enough distance from the public, providing a forum through which representatives could have open and honest discussions with one another regarding policy.

Many experiences under the Articles of Confederation provided opportunities for reflection and alteration. Much of what the framers focused on was trying to ensure that governmental representatives were using the best process to make decisions regarding policy. As the actions of the state legislatures demonstrated in the early years of the Articles of Confederation a lack of sound deliberation permitted the passage of several measures that were not beneficial for the state or country as a whole. Rhode Island was one of many states during the years immediately following the revolution to have a legislature that was unable to resist the calls from the people for more paper money which in turn caused a huge devaluation of the currency. Joseph Bessette in his work
The Mild Voice of Reason quoted historian Allan Nevins observation that “the assembly lost the appearance of a deliberative body..., for secret conclaves decided upon most measures and hurried them through without real debate.”\(^2\) The national government also found itself ineffective at sound deliberation. James Madison observed that members of Congress “too frequently displayed the character rather of partisans of their respective States than of impartial guardians of a common interest” meaning that “the greatest interests of the nation have suffered.”\(^3\) As a result, many began to wonder whether the highly democratic government was beneficial for the people. As Joseph Bessette observed, “In most states the legislatures have simply proven incapable of deliberating and legislating effectively, raising the question whether sound political deliberation was compatible with democratic forms.”\(^4\)

Obviously, one of the most critical problems to rectify was the inability for political leaders to have a system in which proper deliberation could occur. Deliberation is an essential component of the American political process. Without deliberation, the process of determining who gets what and when could not be done in a way that the framers desired. The short experiment in self-government under the Articles of Confederation had helped our framers to understand that “there are two kinds of public voice in a democracy- one more immediate or spontaneous uninformed and unreflective; the other more deliberative, taking longer to develop and resting on a fuller consideration of information and arguments- and that only the latter is fit to rule.” (Bessette, 35) The framers had seen multiple instances in which they believed short-sightedness by a

\(^3\) Bessette, 26.
\(^4\) Bessette, 13.
majority had led to problematic policies. They felt as though a strong national legislature was needed but that it also had to be structured in a way that would limit the power of majority factions so that sound deliberation would be forced to occur. In order to ensure that deliberation would be possible the framers made larger districts to try and correct what they saw as ignorant politicians taking advantage of smaller districts. The founders also removed the president, judges, and senators from the pressure of direct election. They believed that these precautions would allow more knowledgeable and broad-sighted individuals to be elected to public office. In *The Federalist Paper #10*, James Madison wrote a rebuttal to those expressing concerns of these changes saying it was important, “to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens” so that the representatives would be part of a system in which “wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country.”\(^5\) In short, they believed these changes would help to ensure that deliberation would occur.

In addition, other changes were placed in the Constitution to try to ensure a deliberative body under the new form of government. In order to prevent passion and incompetence from ruling the legislative branch, the framers wanted to ensure a limited number of representatives: “small bodies, the framers believed, were less subject to confusion, intemperance, and passion than large ones.”\(^6\) They also increased the length of terms in Congress (two years for the House of Representatives and six years for the Senate) because of the time it takes to become knowledgeable of the different topics and the legislative procedures. The framers also believed that by having lengthier terms the


\(^6\) Bessette, 21.
representatives could afford to make policy decisions that in the short-term would be unpopular. Since they would have more length between elections they wouldn’t be as tied to the people’s wants and needs.

As a result of these safeguards meant to place restraints on factions, to limit the power of the legislative branch, and distance the policymaking from the people the framers believed the new system through careful deliberation would end up ruling in the best interest of the country. Although the House of Representatives was originally the only part of the federal government that was directly elected by the people, the framers still felt that this would not totally disconnect the public’s will from the government. Rather, they felt that the system created protected the democratic elements while promoting the deliberation the framers so greatly desired for the new government.

Indeed, through the safeguards placed in the Constitution in 1787 the ability for sound deliberation seemed to be secured. However, as the nation has continued to develop some political observers believe that the deliberative body set up under the Constitution of 1787 has been altered in light of contemporary politics and media involvement in the deliberation process. As media has become more encompassing, competitive, and accessible the process of policymaking and the ability to deliberate has had to respond to these changes. In his piece “Hyperdemocracy”, Hugh Heclo described the changes that have occurred in American culture. He said, “But American politics has been transformed in recent decades. The political system has become sensitive- indeed, hypersensitive- to the public’s opinions and anxieties... American democracy is more open and inclusive than ever before, and citizens have unprecedented access to information about the workings of their government and the issues before it. Yet instead
of becoming more engaged in democratic politics, the public has grown alienated from it.” This phenomenon noted by Diana Mutz was described in “The Media’s Role in Public Negativity Towards Congress” (Hibbling and Thiess-Morse) in which they observed “Citizens ... dislike being exposed to processes endemic to democratic government. People do not wish to see uncertainty, conflicting options, long debate, competing interests, confusion, bargaining, and compromised, imperfect solutions.” As a consequence, more exposure to the democratic process makes the American public less inclined to support deliberation. Access to more media coverage in politics has seemed to cause disillusionment with the very political process the framers worked so hard to create.

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Section 2: The Changing Relationship between Congress and the Media

The media has been an integral tool in the American political process since before the founding of this country. Media sources have been invaluable to the American public and the political process not only because they have allowed Americans to be informed about contemporary political issues, but also because the media allows the American public to learn about the varying political opinions. Founding Father James Madison said, “A popular Government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives them.”

However, as the twenty-four hour news cycle and technological advances have provided increased avenues through which to learn and express viewpoints it has become necessary to study the impact that these new media sources can have on the deliberative process. In essence, have technological advancements and an electorate more aware of and accustomed to expressing their opinion and having instantaneous access to answers impacted the way that Congressional representatives can achieve policy decisions?

Politicians have often been able to use the media to help inform or persuade Americans to agree with their viewpoint. Indeed the publications of *The Federalist Papers*

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were an attempt by supporters of the Constitution to use the media to persuade the American public to agree with their viewpoint. Media has also been used to help garner support for government policies such as greater government oversight of industries after disasters or accidents, entry into World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the World Trade Center, and the necessity of the Cold War to name a few examples. Media has been what has permitted the average citizen to be knowledgeable and aware of government policies and current events from the first newspapers and radio addresses to the nightly news on the major networks and eventually to the media technological age of today. Political scientist Roger McDowell describes the relationship between media and government as the following: the media “see themselves as participating in the governmental process by focusing attention on issues and by influencing public officials to consider the impact of their behavior when reported in the press. Government officials also expect the press to bring government information to the attention of the public.”

This excerpt demonstrates the dependent relationship that both the media and the government have with each other.

As media has become more interactive, instantaneous, and personal it is important to evaluate what type of impact this may potentially have on the political process. Specifically have the types of new media changed the way that citizens view the political process of deliberation and the way politicians conduct deliberation? Legislators are often criticized for their decisions regarding policy issues. While it can be assumed that no legislator can make every constituent and citizen happy with each policy decision,

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over the last number of years there has been an increased cry by some to make legislators more accountable to the “public’s will”.

In order to be able to understand how media has impacted Congress and their ability to deliberate policy, it is important to evaluate the changes that have taken place in Congress. In contrast to today’s Congress, the Congress of the mid-twentieth century was dominated by key leaders who often worked through policy initiatives and political conflicts in private. The Old House and Senate while having some differences still found that their leaders had more power than other members and while not minimizing the differences between the parties were often able to create policy solutions that were supported by a majority of the members through thoughtful and open deliberation. Another key component for the success of the Old Regime was instilling in younger members the values they were expected to emulate while on the Hill. Those values included: compromising, reaching “across the aisle”, resisting personal attacks, developing friendships, and creating policy that could help others in their policy interests. Failure to accept and follow the norms could prove to be detrimental to any junior member for “individuals understood to be ‘responsible’ were those members who were able to arrive at the appropriate balance between securing their own preferences and maintaining the collective interest of the institution to which they were elected.”

Although the role of the media under the Old House and Senate was limited it was not non-existent. There were times when Congress found it beneficial to use the media on a policy issue. In addition, House and Senate members knew that sometimes it was important to make sure the local media let constituents know what they were doing for

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them in Congress. Due to the nature of the Old House and Senate Regimes the Congress was relatively removed from the press and outside influences. Junior congressmen often found the best way to advancement was through hard work, specializing, playing nice, and courting the leadership. Most of the compromising and brokering of deals that was required to produce legislation was done in a courteous, cooperative, and far-sighted approach to lawmaking. Furthermore this was often done in private and enlisting the media was not a commonly used tool because it was inherently at odds with how Congress got things done. In fact, “The norms of courtesy and accommodation, which support personal negotiations and compromise, are in many respects at odds with a world where the interested parties make their cases in very public ways” and “the specific problem with the sort of ‘public posturing’ that goes with a public strategy, as Kernell has observed, is that it raises the cost of ‘compromise’ for politicians who must, in a very visible way, trim their demands to reach a deal.”

The election of 1958 may be the election that helped to encourage the Congressional shift and its relationship with the media. Many Democrats that were elected in that election believed that the institution and its norms were preventing them from achieving a broader legislative agenda. The Democratic Study Group pushed the Democratic leaders to make changes to challenge the strict hierarchy including permitting more liberal representatives to serve on an expanded House Rules committee. When Lyndon Johnson vacated the Senate Majority Leader position this allowed more liberal senators to begin to change the Senate. Throughout the next number of years a number of reforms were passed that included many changes as they curtailed “the prerogatives of

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12Malecha, 12-13.
committee chairs, weakened the role of seniority, augmented the influence of the rest of the membership, and brought greater transparency or ‘sunshine’ to the legislative process.” Congressional leaders also saw their power diminish as committees and subcommittees grew in power and resources. As the old regime fell away a new Congress developed which saw members from the most junior to senior members using the media to help achieve their goals.

Some of the influences that have helped to promote this media centered Congress include: “the declining power of political parties, transformations in the pressure group system, the emergence of a new type of member, responses to presidential relations with Congress, and a growing partisanship on Capitol Hill that provoked changes in congressional leadership strategies.” Indeed, as more junior members found themselves in a more powerful and egalitarian position than previous junior members there was less incentive to follow the rules and guidelines put in place by earlier leadership. They also found themselves in a position to be able to influence the law-making process at multiple points during the legislative process. As older Congressional members were replaced with newer members, Congress became much more media friendly and more eager to embrace it than the old Congress. Therefore, as the old and more private ways of making policy increasingly seemed ineffective younger members gravitated to the media to help them accomplish their policy goals. As a result using the media then became a viable way to accomplish goals. By 1977 (House) and 1986 (Senate) broadcasting bans were dispelled. Since there has been an “increase in number and diversity of news platforms” it “has multiplied ‘opportunities’ for members of Congress, as well as other

13 Malecha, 16.
14 Malecha 14.
political actors, to follow an outside strategy in carrying out their activities.”\textsuperscript{15} In fact, Congressional scholar David Mayhew noted that Congressional representatives “have been shifting the focus of their public commenting, and even their deliberating, from the House and Senate floors to the television talk shows that proliferated during the 1990s.”\textsuperscript{16}

Events such as Watergate, Vietnam, and the civil rights movement also impacted the way the media covered government. Larry Sabato described this transition saying, “Watergate shifted the orientation of journalism away from mere description- providing an accurate account of happenings- and toward prescription.”\textsuperscript{17} Mistrust in the government, Sabato suggests, also led to a new breed of reporters getting involved in journalism. He said, “As a group they were idealistic, though aggressively mistrustful of all authority, and they shared a contempt for ‘politics as usual’…. twenty years later the Vietnam and Watergate generation dominates journalism.”\textsuperscript{18}

Consequently, while the media often works to the benefit of a member of Congress there can be times when the use of media becomes problematic for a politician. As noted in “The Public Congress: Congressional Deliberation in a New Media Age”, “Even the slightest miscues or controversial remarks can, for instance, now be recorded by any one of an ever expanding number of…. ‘citizen journalists.’”\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, the vast array of media sources and their ability to garner the public’s attention “promotes grandstanding, needless disputation, and endless delay. Perhaps worst of all, it creates in the American public a pervasive sense of contentiousness, mistrust, and outright

\textsuperscript{15} Malecha, 36.
\textsuperscript{16} Malecha, 13.
\textsuperscript{18} Sabato, 39.
\textsuperscript{19} Malecha, 38-39.
A serious consequence of these developments is that in lieu of the protected environment that the framers intended for deliberation and policymaking, policy now must be made in a public, hyper-partisan, and high-risk sphere with many actors: legislators, commentators, citizens, and multiple media sources.

20 Heclo, 65.
Section 3: The Impact of New Media on Congressional Deliberation

Although there are many benefits to the sources of new media that have become available to many over the last number of years their impact on Americans and their political system are not without their drawbacks. Specifically, more access to new forms of media doesn’t necessarily mean increased interaction between citizens and their government. As Jeremy Mayer and Michael Cornfield noted in their piece “The New Media” the “The New England town hall democracy and the classic democracy of the Greek city-states allowed for more interactivity between governed and governors. The citizens could guide the discussion toward matters of concern through questions and speeches. Television does not directly allow for any interactivity between the viewers and the viewed, the citizens and their leaders. This empowers gatekeepers of the media, who are given the power to set that nation’s agenda by what they cover, and perhaps more importantly by what they do not cover.”21 As citizens and their government become more dependent upon technological sources of media like the television the relationship between government and its citizens may not benefit. Consequently new sources of media may not empower citizens but rather empower the media sources as more people become dependent upon them for their knowledge without advancing the relationship between government and citizens in a positive direction. As Americans are able to

watch House or Senate debates on C-Span or tune into their favorite cable news show for the latest sound bites of the day they indeed may not be empowered but rather continually disillusioned by what they see or don’t see.

Additionally, the internet, individual blogs, and competition for ratings in the continuous news cycle encourage the promotion of rumors or non-verified stories and opinions. In “The New Media” Mayer and Cornfield commented “The internet’s virtue of no authoritative control permits dissidents and eccentrics to promulgate their views to the world.... a book that was released by a reputable academic press could be expected to have undergone lengthy peer review by knowledgeable experts. A story printed in the New York Times underwent careful and redundant fact checking.... The rapid pace of the media in the era of cyberpolitics has removed much of the filtering process; rumor, falsehood, and innuendo quickly move into public discourse.”22 Without fact checking or verification of truth, rumor or falsehood can spread like wildfire further damaging the ability of Congress to deliberate.

Larry Sabato described the relationship between the media and its coverage of politics saying, “It has become a spectacle without equal in modern American politics: the news media, print and broadcast, go after a wounded politician like sharks in a feeding frenzy. The wound may have been self-inflicted, and the politician may richly deserve his or her fate, but the journalists now take center stage in the process, creating the news as much as reporting it, changing both the shape of election-year politics and the contours of government.”23 Furthermore, as opportunities for effective and authentic

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22 Mayer, 216.
23 Sabato, 1.
citizenship are diminished trust in the government has been eroded. As Hugh Heclo observed, “In the electronic talk show of democracy, those citizens in the middle who see merits and demerits on both sides of an issue tend to be systematically excluded.” As a result of the aforementioned characteristics regarding the media’s coverage of government an environment has been created in which politicians can be relentlessly scrutinized, they find it difficult to engage in honest deliberation, and seeking policy decisions and compromises in the middle will be attacked. As author and commentator Michael Smerconish recently observed the media environment has taken the middle out of politics. In a recent article in The Washington Post he wrote, “No wonder that, when elected, many treat their legislative colleagues the way they would a pundit on a split screen. Collegiality used to be commonplace. Now it's political kryptonite.”

Perhaps the most troubling characteristic of the new media is the desire to focus on stories that will rile up the viewers and the lack of friendly discussion and debate. Gerry Spence quoted in his book Bloodthirsty Bitches and Pious Pimps of Power Matt Gross a former FOX News employee as he reflected that he and others were to “seek out stories that cater to white men who listen to talk radio and yell at their televisions... The idea was to get those viewers out of their seats, screaming at the TV, the politicians, the liberals-whomever-simply by running a provocative story.” Although it is hard to prove that cable and more polarizing news sources have been the sole cause of our Congress’s decreasing ability to have authentic deliberation it is logical to conclude that there is

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24 McDowell, 152.
25 Heclo, 66.
27 Spence, 68-69.
some correlation present. Consider this opinion expressed in an editorial by the London bureau chief for FOX News “Even we at FOX News manage to get some lefties on the air occasionally and often let them finish their sentences before we club them to death and feed the scraps to Karl Rove and Bill O’Reilly.”\textsuperscript{28} This type of mentality of not just disagreeing with your opponent but “clubbing them to death” cannot promote the mindset of the type of open deliberation the framers intended. Furthermore, because citizens are drawn to the high-conflict coverage media sources newspapers and other media are forced to compete for interest and viewers. Campbell Brown, who recently announced that she would quit her prime-time eight o’clock news show, blamed the lack of appetite for non-biased and non-entertaining news coverage. In her statement she said “Shedding my own journalistic skin to try to inhabit the kind of persona that might co-exist in that lineup is simply impossible for me” indicating once again that moderate stances and news shows that don’t cater to a certain political viewpoint are no longer able to find success in the United States.\textsuperscript{29}

Television sources are not the only media who must compete for attention. Political scientist Richard McDowell noted in a publication that newspapers now have to fight to be more interesting to compete with other media sources noting that “the source now deals directly with the mass audience, to the ‘inadvertent audience’ - those who will watch if the information is interesting.”\textsuperscript{30} Since Americans can choose at any point in time what they want to learn about and from what source there can be an incomplete portrayal of a situation. In fact, even though “Americans today are informed more

\textsuperscript{28} Spence, 69.
\textsuperscript{29} Smerconish, sec. A.
\textsuperscript{30} McDowell, 154.
rapidly about more subjects than ever before...the complexity of public problems usually gets lost in the dramatic factoids and disconnected commentaries. Instead of knowledge about public affairs, Americans acquire a superficial knowingness.”

Additionally, because citizens can sit in the comfort of their own home watching their television or remain anonymous behind a blogging screen name there is once again this lack of interactivity and personal connection. “The New Media” piece by Mayer and Cornfield called this “cocooning” noting that “the growth of technology’s role in American life may contribute to a sense of hyper-individualism, as we all cocoon ourselves away from not only politics but real-world human connections... perhaps such groups (web groups) fail to provide community solidarity and other group benefits that are necessary to civil society.” Mayer and Cornfield argue that instead of promoting this sense of community and belonging that supporters of the new media claim to be true it instead has the opposite effect. They then go on to compare a town hall meeting of the 1950’s to an Internet chat room of the present. Comparing the two they note that “the union hall meeting requires physical presence, and interactions beyond the level of typing and reading. Those present see each other as complete beings, who have left their private domains to enter into public discourse... By contrast, the denizens of a chat room or the readers of a bulletin board may hide behind pseudonyms; they may misrepresent their true selves or opinions with careless abandon. Most importantly, they may not feel the same sense of connection to each other as do people who meet in the flesh.” As a result of this lack of interactivity and connection to the human quality it is easy to see how new

31 Heclo, 65.
32 Mayer, 216.
33 Mayer, 216.
media has made it convenient to demonize those who disagree with you politically and viciously attack them which consequently has hurt the vital deliberation process.

Authentic and honest deliberation has been on the decline in the United States Congress over the last number of years. The framers specifically structured the new government to be able to resist the “excesses of democracy”. But as Hugh Heclo remarked in “Hyperdemocracy” as the American system of government has moved to be more democratic the “Constitutional mechanisms that the Framers had employed to refine public participation, keeping the demos (people) at a safe distance from the government- devices such as the Electoral College and the indirect election of senators-faded into insignificance or were removed.” The ability of policymakers to deliberately consider and negotiate policy separate from public opinion and input has been severely diminished with media advancements. Due to increased media coverage “technology has reduced the time for deliberation. Call-in talk shows register public responses even as major events unfold, and the Internet gives anyone with a computer and a modem minute-by-minute access to pending legislative committee agendas and congressmen’s voting positions.” Many people today expect their representatives to act as delegates, wanting them to vote the way they personally think is best. Joseph Bessette in The Mild Voice of Reason rebukes this saying, “In American representative democracy, national legislators serve, in effect, as surrogate deliberators for their constituents. Where the citizenry lack the time, the institutional environment, and perhaps the interest to deliberate in depth on public issues, legislators are expressly

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34 Bessette, 34.
35 Heclo, 62.
36 Heclo, 66.
chosen to devote their full care and attention to public matters... this duty to deliberate is an intrinsic element of the American constitutional order.”

What may be most detrimental for the policymaking process is lack of acceptance for compromise during deliberation and policymaking. The insulated forum for authentic deliberation that the framers tried to secure under the Constitution has been transformed into a showcase for sound bites and attention. Hugh Heclo described the current climate for debate in the following way: “The ‘debate’ instead becomes a forum of ideological crusades- confronting power with power... media campaigns with media campaigns. Policy debates on welfare reform... are rich in examples of this phenomenon of debate without deliberation. Honest skepticism and moderated thinking get pushed to the sidelines.” Deborah Tannen further described the current debate atmosphere as “a culture of argument” that promotes “a pervasive warlike atmosphere.” Michael Smerconish observed that: “I'd argue that the climate in Washington is being shaped by an artificial presentation of attitudes on cable TV and talk radio. To view and to listen is to become convinced that there are only two, diametrically opposed philosophical approaches to the issues. And yet, working daily in both mediums, I often think that the only people I meet who see the world entirely through liberal or conservative lenses are the hosts with whom I rub shoulders.” As a result of this war-like atmosphere and zero-sum mentality of policy debate in the media, political scientists Diana Mutz and Byron Reeves believe that when citizens see the uncivil debates on television that “Viewers’

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37 Bessette, 218.
38 Heclo, 68.
39 Mutz, 1.
40 Smerconish, sec. A.
sense that politicians are engaged in pointless bickering” and that this belief “is assumed to be fed by media coverage emphasizing the intensity of conflict whenever possible.”

The freedom of press and speech is one of the most important cornerstones of American culture. As James Madison noted when discussing the free press said, “Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives them.” However, as technology changes it is important to understand the changes that occur in the press and speech and the impact these changes can have on the government and its institutions.

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41 Mutz, 1.
42 Spence, 93.
Section 4: Conclusion

While this paper has focused solely on the relationship between the media and government regarding its impact on deliberation it is obviously not the only factor that has impacted the deliberative process designed by the framers. However, as the aforementioned information demonstrates increased openness, media accessibility, and decreasing civility has not necessarily been beneficial to the democratic process and culture in the United States. In order to be knowledgeable regarding the changes in deliberation, it is extremely important to study and understand this relationship. Hugh Heclo likened the current political climate to a spoiled child saying: “the political culture of hyperdemocracy encourages citizens to behave like spoiled children, demanding that government ‘meet my needs,’ and alternating between sullen withdrawal and boisterous whining.”

Furthermore, Larry Sabato in his book Feeding Frenzy noted that “Oddly enough, just as the coverage of major political events is expanding... the quality is simultaneously declining” and that “this gameship coverage of politics aids in developing frenzies by discouraging sober discussion of policy choices while fostering personal conflict, controversy, and confrontation.”

If the United States hopes to return to a climate of civility that promotes deliberation in policymaking, it must understand how the media and its relationship must

43 Heclo, 69.
44 Sabato, 34-35.
be changed in order to allow that change to occur. As Hugh Heclo concluded in his work “Hyperdemocracy”, “we need not retreat from its openness, inclusiveness, or dependence on modern media technology. But we must work at organizing the talk of democracy in ways that make it better- more honest, more deliberative” and we must “make it safer for those who would lead us to tell the truth as they see it.” Americans must demand more from their government, the media, and themselves. They must encourage open and honest debate by rejecting media coverage that aims to divide the public and promote the demonization of others and they must permit politicians to speak their mind without trying to turn their words into weapons. That is not to say that there cannot be disagreements for the system is meant to have robust and lively discussion but in an arena that the framers carefully crafted to protect the deliberation process. Furthermore, the American public must come to accept that a more open policymaking process is not necessarily a better process. Until the American people insist on an atmosphere that will allow for open and honest deliberation the same zero-sum game of politics will continue and solutions to today’s biggest policy crises cannot realistically be reached. The American people must recognize the importance of the safeguards put in place by the founders and demand more from their government, the media, and themselves in order to ensure that in light of today’s technology and political environment the intention of the framers for thoughtful deliberation can once again be realized.

45 Heclo, 70-71.
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