

Divided and unified government



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The presidencies of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan are clear examples of divided government, in which they both served under terms where they were contended with the opposing party within Congress. In the presidencies of James Carter, in which he served under terms where he had complete control of the Congress, which includes the House of Representatives and the Senate, and control over the Executive Branch. At the beginning of the United States government the most prevalent form of government was that of unified government. Yet after the 1970s and more specifically the Watergate scandal, divided government became the more prevalent as a response to this scandal.

The comparison of the efficiency of divided government and the efficiency of unified government is significant to understanding whether commonly held myths about government are true or false. By analyzing the facts of the comparison in efficiency of the amount of major lawmaking and major investigations between divided and unified government, there can be better commonly held knowledge among the populace of the United States, which will allow for better informed voters in the near future. By understanding the commonly held myths about government, there can be better comprehension into the decisions and mindset of voters in the United States. If it is possible to debunk a commonly held myth about divided government, it is entirely possible to create a government that works in the best interest of the general public.

The root at which I hold my interest in this subject is at the fact that many voters in the United States are uninformed about the politics of our government. Through the analysis of both types of government that can

sprout in the United States, I might be able to enhance the mindset of many voters. It is not that voters are incorrect about their ideals; it is more closely related to the fact that many voters don't understand how to get their ideal through to the representatives that they have voted for. The entire system in which major lawmaking and major investigations occur is very interesting to say the least. The Legislative branch and the Executive branch are both spreading the reach at which their powers extend. It is therefore critical to understand the process by which I can become an informed voter that is able to get my ideals across to the representatives that I will be able to vote for soon.

Literature Review

Unified / Divided Government

The United States of America has sustained two major political parties: the Republican Party and the Democrat Party. These two parties have allowed the United States government to have separations in party control over two branches in our government. These two branches are: the Legislative Branch, which is the Congress and Executive Branch, which is the President. Although, unified government has been the norm since the creation of our government. Due to the scandal of the Nixon Administration in the Watergate Scandal, the United States has popularized the use of the divided government, to be able to keep the other party in check. The separation of the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch is the United States' separation of powers. This separation of powers leads to a checks and balances on the federal government. Many voters view divided government

as a good thing; Parties jointly in power are seen to perform a service by checking each other. (Mayhew, 1991), therefore many voters prefer it as a system of checks and balances.

The United State government has functioned for so long because it is able to bend and become malleable to the needs to two political parties. Within a unified government, which was the preferred government at the creation of the United States, one political party is in control of the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch. A unified government is prevalent in the presidential career of President James Carter. On the other hand of the spectrum, within a divided government, this is where either the Executive Branch or the Legislative Branch is controlled by two different political parties. This is the preferred government after the Watergate Scandal during President Nixon's career. The efficiency of both types of government has been crucial to determining which type of government will best suit the needs of the United States.

Nixon Administration

The United States has been governed under the authority of President Nixon during the years of 1919 to 1974. As our 37th President of the United States, and the only one to resign, he has gone through a great ordeal. The events leading up to his resignation are crucial to understanding the significance of the backlash against unified government. President Richard Nixon faced great adversity with the Vietnam War; he was put into a situation where most of the United States citizens wanted an immediate withdrawal of troops out of Vietnam, but he couldn't do that without looking weak. President

Nixon has prevailed through many obstacles during his career, yet he has also accomplished a great deal. For example, President Nixon gained the United States great relations with China.

The Watergate Scandal of President Nixon' career was the most distraught event that could have happened to President Nixon. The Watergate Scandal was all of the mischievous and clandestine operations that President Nixon ordered, which were to bug many offices of people who were opposition to President Nixon. President Nixon used his power as President of the United States through many of his executive branches to gain valuable knowledge about the opposition. President Nixon made a fatal mistake, when he sent five men into the Democratic Party Headquarters and they were caught. This Watergate Scandal ended in the ultimate resignation of President Nixon on August 9, 1974.

Carter Administration

During the Carter Administration, President James Carter was the 39th President of the United States. President James Carter faced the U. S. energy crisis, deregulation, and the United States' boycott of the Moscow Olympics. The U. S. energy crisis was declared by President Carter through a televised speech and this lead to him advising each and every citizen to conserve energy. President James Carter went through deregulation with his cabinet, the cabinet discussed regulatory reform. We estimate that government regulation cost \$100 billion this year – about 5 percent of our GNP. We're trying to cut down on regulation, having had remarkable success in the airline industry – maybe a good example. (Carter, 2010); President Carter

went through deregulation not only with the airline industry, which the United States removed government control over fares, President Carter deregulated the American Beer Industry, which allowed home brewing.

President James Carter went through the U. S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Although this action wasn't popular to the many people who were waiting for the Olympics; President Carter took this action to respond to Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. By boycotting the 1980 Summer Olympics, President James Carter was able to accomplish nothing. The Soviet Union left Afghanistan long after President Carter left office. President James Carter was able to get plenty done in a unified government, which allowed him to easily pass deregulation laws.

Reagan Administration

The Reagan Administration, marked with the 40th President of the United States, President Ronald Reagan. President Ronald Reagan served during the years of 1981 to 1989. President Ronald Reagan brought about the idea of Reaganomics; he survived an assassination attempt and went through the Iran-Contra affair. President Ronald Reagan brought up the concept of Reaganomics, which was his way to increase the growth of the economy. President Ronald Reagan tried to spur this growth by advocating a reduction of tax rates. Furthermore, President Ronald Reagan introduced the government in the control of the money supply to try to reduce inflation. President Ronald Reagan went through deregulation, just like of that of his predecessor, President James Carter. President Ronald Reagan did his best to reduce the United States government spending. President Ronald Reagan

actually survived an assassination attempt on his life by a man who was not convicted on the plea of insanity. President Ronald Reagan went through the Iran-Contra affair which made his executive branch take part of illegal and scandalous operations to fund weapons to Iran to receive seven American hostages in return.

Research Statement

The United States government's method by which they utilize their legislative power is through the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch. The Legislative Branch, which is composed of the Congress, which in itself is composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate, is the driving force of where divided government and unified government occurs. The Executive Branch, controlled by the President of the United States, is in a way, the supreme voice for his political party. The President of the United States determines which laws are passed; therefore the Congress must come to terms to be able to pass a law that suits the President of the United States. The presidencies of Nixon and Reagan showed clear divided government and the presidency of Carter showed clear unified government. All of the presidencies contained great ordeals and hardships.

The efficiency of the two types of government: divided government and unified government are contended. Divided government is a form of government that induces conflict between the Congress' inner workings and the Executive Branch. Unified government is a form of government that induces union and ease of lawmaking between the Congress' inner workings and the Executive Branch. Does the commonly held myth that a unified

government works more efficiently than a divided government uphold when considering the presidencies of Nixon, Carter, and Reagan? Does the frequency of major lawmaking or major investigations in government determine whether a unified government is more efficient than a divided government?

The posed questions are significant to understand which type of government is best for this generation's lifestyle. By posing these two questions, the concept of lawmaking and major investigations is enlightened. It is important to understand how the process of lawmaking and major investigations occurs within our legislative branch and executive branch. It is also important to understand the efficiency at which these two types of governments operate at. By understanding this efficiency, it is possible to determine how we should run the United States government.

Research Findings

Efficiency of Unified and Divided Government

The efficiency of divided government compared to that of unified government is commonly held that divided government holds a stalemate of sorts when the two political parties in control hold their ground and refuse to give ground to what they consider to be their enemy. On the level of lawmaking, this process can be interrupted with divided government; this means at least that significant lawmaking can be expected to fall off when party control is divided. (Mayhew, 1991) Divided government can come to this standstill if both political parties are unable to compromise for the benefit of others.

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The divided government by which the post Watergate generation has been accustomed to has been deceived or for a better term, they have been misled to believe that a unified government is much more efficient for their generation than that of a divided government. In terms of the efficiency of each type of government, the efficiency is determined by the frequency of major lawmaking and the effectiveness of that major lawmaking. Within the legislative process, it is quite simple to pass a law when the government is unified. However, the efficiency of this law derives from its effectiveness for the purpose of bettering the general public of the United States. An array of elected officials – presidents, senators, and House members – heaved up by different constituencies at different dates and enjoying fixed terms and constitutional powers. (Mayhew, 2008)

Frequency of Major Lawmaking / Investigations

Power struggles between conservative Republican and liberal Democratic elected politicians in the White House. The Senate and the House of Representatives are based upon the rapidly changing ideological composition of voters who make up the Democratic and Republican parties and nominate their respective parties' candidates. (Black & Black, 2007) The frequencies at which major lawmaking and major investigations within a divided government and unified government occur differ slightly when compared. Within a unified government, the frequency of major lawmaking and major investigations occurs slightly more frequently than that of a divided government because within a divided government, the opposing parties are unable to compromise and therefore never gain common ground to have major lawmaking as frequently as unified government. In unified

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government, there is only one party in control, and therefore the President, such as that of President James Carter is able to bring both the House of Representatives and the Senate to an agreement with deregulation and the energy crisis. On the other hand, within a divided government, such as the career of both President Richard Nixon and President Ronald Reagan, they both were able to bring the opposing parties within Congress to have an efficient government. With the presidency of Ronald Reagan, he was able to bring Congress together to pass laws of deregulation. On the basis of the efficiency of divided and unified government, the overall answer is that divided government brings about compromise within the Congress that is valuable to creating laws that benefit all, instead of a unified government that only implements its ideals.