

First its impact on party policy and campaigning



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

First Past the Post is a simple plurality electoral system used in the United States and other countries such as Canada, Ghana and Britain, during general elections to allocate votes to positions of power. It uses single member districts and candidate centered voting to select the candidate who receives the majority of votes, as the winner of the election. This system, simply provides the voter with the names of the candidates running for a position and the voter is required to select only one candidate. It provides a clear-cut choice for voters between two main parties by allowing the voters to choose between the people running rather than the parties they are running for. The First Past the Post system is praised for its tendency to produce winners who represent the ideology and geography of the majority of voters. It is also praised for preventing extremist parties from gaining positions of power, if and only if those parties do not represent the majority (Goldsmith).

Though the First Past the Post system has many good qualities, its disadvantages outweigh the benefits. For example, the Electoral Reform Society, based in the U. K., argues that FPTP is “ bad for voters, bad for government and bad for democracy”(Senscot). Some of the biggest problems with the First Past the Post system are its tendency to distort geographical representation, its impact on party policy and campaigning and tactical voting.

The “ winner takes all” nature of the First Past the Post system leads to distorted geographical representation in the legislature since there is a direct correlation between party support and the ideology or geography of an area. For example, Rockbridge County in Virginia, tends to vote for Republican

candidates rather than Democratic candidates because of the history and culture of the people. Despite the fact that there are some people in Rockbridge County who support the Democratic party, there won't be Democratic candidates in positions of power because the First Past the Post system only favors the majority. This leads to the voices of a group of people being neglected. In order to maintain their positions in power, parties can easily gerrymander certain districts and constituencies to ensure that they remain in power. Gerrymandering is act of manipulating district boundaries in order to establish majority support for particular party or group thereby creating a political advantage for that party or group. Gerrymandering dilutes the voting power of an opposing party by spreading out its voters across the districts. This leads to the creation of safe seats and increases incumbent advantage.

Gerrymandering severely distorts geographical representation because it creates a false majority in a district or constituency (McGreal). The first past the post system also has a negative impact on party policy and campaigning. Due to the fact the parties only have one shot at gaining power through the first past post system, they make sure to select the candidates they know will appeal to their majority voters. This leads possible strong candidates being overlooked by their parties because they do not fit the " ideal candidate" image that voters look for. This creates a big problem because American voters tend to vote old, white male candidates.

This prevents women, African-Americans and other minority groups from being offered the chance to stand for election. Parties also campaign in ways that help them keep their voters on their side. If parties establish certain

<https://assignbuster.com/first-its-impact-on-party-policy-and-campaigning/>

areas of the country to be political deserts, they ignore the whole area completely and move on to areas they know they can secure voters. This creates a problem because it leads to these areas being ignored when it comes to framing policy (McGreal). The first past the post system encourages tactical voting as voters tend to vote for the candidate they most prefer and against the candidate they dislike. For example, during the 2016 elections, people only voted for Donald Trump because they strongly disliked Hillary Clinton or they refused to vote because they strongly disliked both candidates. Due to the fact that parties select the "ideal candidate" to represent them, voter choice is severely restricted because they can only choose from the options they are given by parties. It also leads severely diminishes the chances smaller parties or third parties have of winning an election.

Voters like to vote for candidates they think have a shot at winning. Third parties almost never reach the level of popular support they need to be considered as possible winners of the election. This is because the first past the post systems tends to create two major parties that either lean to the left or right of the political spectrum. Voters feel like they are throwing away their votes by voting for third parties because they know that third parties have no chance of winning. This is a problem because third parties are very important to the American political system.

They represent the voice of the fringe and bring to light the problems that politicians have ignored. They encourage change in public policy and provide solutions to existing or anticipated problems. Third parties tend to have the people's best interest at heart but because of the first past the post system,

<https://assignbuster.com/first-its-impact-on-party-policy-and-campaigning/>

they may never get the chance to take office (Aceproject. org). The first past the post system hinders American democracy because it strongly favors one group of people. Due to the vast differences in the American population, the first past the post system is not suitable to address the concerns of every group. The American political system needs an electoral system that represents the desires of the people.

It needs a system that will provide the people with an array of choices of candidates instead of narrowing down their choices to two major parties. It needs an electoral system that will allow for the voices of every group to be heard. Afterall, democracy is government for the people and by the people not government for some people by the majority.