



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

OCCASIONAL LECTURE SERIES

Dysfunctional politics in the United States: origins and consequences

James P. Pfiffner

Theatre, Parliament House

Friday 19 July 12.15pm to 1.15pm

United States politics underwent a fundamental shift in the late 20th century. Politics that had allowed compromise, even on very contentious issues, were replaced by the extreme polarisation of political elites, particularly members of Congress. The Democratic and Republican parties in Congress, which each contained significant numbers of moderates, were transformed into narrowly ideological partisans, with little overlap between the two parties.

This partisanship has led to political deadlock that has made it difficult to carry on some of the most fundamental duties of a government, including the financing of governmental functions. Other important public policy problems have gone unanswered due to partisan deadlock. The origins of this polarisation and the gradual polarisation of political elites will be examined and the consequences in the presidential and congressional elections of the 21st century will be explored.

James P. Pfiffner is University Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program in the School of Public Policy at George Mason University. His major areas of expertise are the Presidency, American national government, and public management. Professor Pfiffner has written or edited twelve books on the presidency and American national government, including *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, *Power Play: The Bush Presidency and the Constitution*, and *Torture as Public Policy*.



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