

**POLARIZATION:
THE DECLINE OF
CIVIC HEALTH**

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THE PROJECT FOR CIVIC HEALTH

- Roundtable discussions & civic health summit
- Elway poll of Washingtonians
 - 79% agreed that politicians were more divided & uncivil than the public
 - 24% have stopped talking to a friend or relative over politics
 - 57% would prefer a representative willing to compromise
 - 89% said there are some issues or principles they cannot compromise on
- SCR 8414: Establishment of a joint committee on civic health to make recommendations to the legislature



AT LEAST WE'RE NOT CONGRESS

OPINIONS IN WASHINGTON'S
LEGISLATURE

**IDEOLOGICAL
VERSUS
AFFECTIVE**

HOW WE DEFINE POLARIZATION

INCENTIVIZING EXTREMISM IN MEDIA

- Politicians with a track record of voting along partisan lines receive more news coverage (Kubin)
- Feedback loop:
 - Content that generates outrage gets more engagement = more revenue
 - Users & platforms are incentivized to create outrageous content
 - Laws do not hold news platforms accountable for misinformation

Oxford research

The two-party system itself contributes to extremism in some ways as wells



Regulating the Media

2022 Congressional Research Service report states that false speech is protected under the First Amendment, except for certain subcategories:

“defamation, fraud, political advertisements, and broadcast speech” (United States).

Disclosing of paid content, prohibits false information that could cause public panic

THE PROBLEM

This definition is inaccurate to what constitutes a political advertisement in the modern media sphere.

Name recognition & re-election of incumbents

1949 FAIRNESS DOCTRINE

REPEALED IN 1987 UNDER REAGAN

WHAT DO WE DO?

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

- Media literacy education does not change the psychology of confirmation bias
- “By and large, people do not seek disconfirming evidence and only sometimes take it into account when it is presented to them” (Koslowski 104).
- “Selective exposure dominates content consumption on social media” (Cinelli).

REGULATING MISINFORMATION

- Trustees of public information or market participants?
- Reinstating the Fairness Doctrine to apply to modern media
- Designation of news vs entertainment



THANK YOU

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