

Chapter 5: Close Up on Primary Sources

Reforming American Government



On November 3, 1998, Jesse Ventura became the first Reform party candidate to be elected to a Statewide office. A former professional wrestler, he surprised people everywhere when he won the election for governor of Minnesota. Ventura, whose only previous government experience was as mayor of the town of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, appealed to the State's voters with his support for reforming government and cleaning up the political system. In his book *I Ain't Got Time to Bleed*, Ventura explained his position on some of the important issues facing his State and the nation. These positions reflected the thinking of many independent voters who did not support either of the two main political parties.

The Role of Government

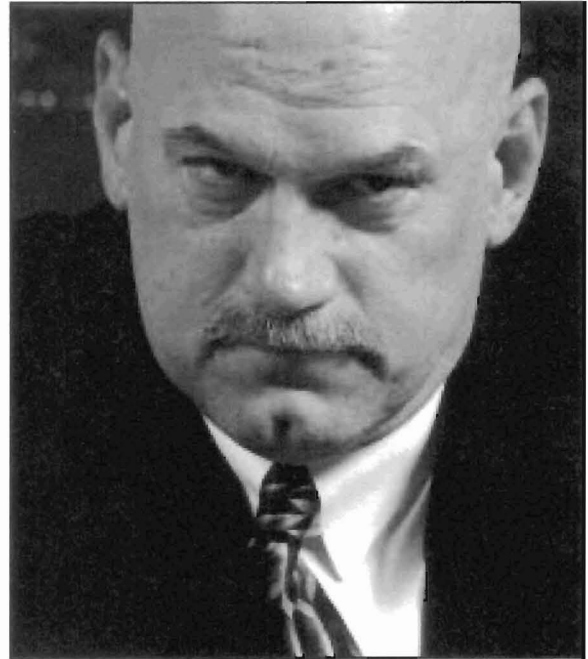
Ventura argues that government has become too big and out of touch with the citizens. He wants the government to be less involved in people's lives, but also wants people to be less dependent on government:

We desperately need to reform government so that we can reclaim more of the decision-making power in our lives, as well as keep more of the money that we earn. We're a capitalist society. Government's role is not to baby-sit us. It's to provide the basic infrastructure and essential public services that will best facilitate our individual and collective prosperity and freedom. Beyond that, it has no business interfering in our lives.

Political Parties

Ventura believes that neither the Republican nor the Democratic party truly represents the American people. He feels that these two major parties, and their candidates, are too dependent on money donations from interest groups:

We need to set up our campaign system so that who gets to run is not a



Jesse Ventura

matter of how much money they have or whether they belong to a party. Campaigns have become far too expensive, and the average candidate ends up selling out to special-interest groups in order to obtain the funding to run...Campaigns should be funded only by the people, from small, individual donations, so that only those individuals that the people truly want will participate.

Questions for Discussion

1. What arguments does Ventura make for reducing the size of government? Why do you think some people might disagree with him?
2. Why is campaign finance reform so important? Would Ventura's proposal solve the problem or would it create problems of its own?



Section 5 Guided Reading and Review
Party Organization

A. As You Read Read pages 137–142.

As you read Section 5, complete the chart below by supplying the missing information in the blanks provided.

National Party Machinery		
Mechanism	Term or when it takes place	Role
National Convention	1. _____ _____	2. _____ _____
National Committee	3. _____ _____	4. _____ _____
National Chairperson	5. _____ _____	6. _____ _____
Congressional Campaign	7. _____ _____	8. _____ _____

Complete each sentence by writing the correct term in the blank provided.

9. Two factors that contribute to the decentralization of parties are _____ and _____.
10. The party out of power operates at a disadvantage because it has no leader comparable to _____.
11. In recent years, there has been a sharp rise in the number of voters who identify themselves as _____.

B. Reviewing Key Terms

On a separate sheet of paper, define the following terms.

12. ward
13. precinct
14. split-ticket voting

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