Introduction

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is magnificent city known world-wide as the birthplace of American democracy. The city served as the center of American ideas and political thought in the formative years of the United States. However, today the city is no longer the Mecca of political ideas and diversity of thought that it once was, unfortunately. Presently, the city is home to a one party system in which the Democratic Party has a monopoly on the city’s politics.

In my paper I will analyze this situation in an in-depth way. I will give reasons as to why the city has become so one sided politically. Along with that, I will present two theories of democracy. I intern to show how they relate to the current and possibly future state of the city of brotherly love. Upon my doing so, I will give two critiques to go along with them. Finally, I will rap the paper up with a prediction on the future of democracy in Philadelphia based on how I see it playing out.

With that being said let’s look at the political history of Philadelphia first. This will provide the background info we need to get started.

Philadelphia-History/Overview

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the City of Brotherly Love, was settled in 1681 by Capt. William Markham. Markham, with a small band of colonists, had been sent out by his cousin; William Penn. They were seeking to establish a safe haven for Quakers, or Friends, as they were and are still commonly known. Quakers were often the victims of persecution and intolerance both in England and the American colonies up to that point.
Penn arrived the following year with the intention of creating a refuge for his people.\(^1\) Eventually the city provided the Quakers with the refuge that they had been seeking. Unforeseen by them at the time, the city would soon go on to provide a home for more than just the Quakers.

Within a span of one hundred years Philadelphia would go on to become the centerpiece of the eastern seaboard. Along with that, Philadelphia would soon become the leading industrial, economic, entertainment, and political center of the thirteen original English colonies. With the city over the course of the century, eventually became the home of both liberty and the newly formed democracy that would become known as the United States of America. By 1790, the city would have served as the capitol of the colonies under both, the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution.

Over the course of the next two hundred plus years of Philadelphia’s history the city underwent a great deal of change. Its significance within the country began to decline as did its economy and political systems as well. The city had at one time been America’s capitol, its largest city, and the center of American political, economic, and social undertakings. However, by the late 1950s the city was headed towards economic decay and lagging behind cities like New York and Boston in terms of growth.

Fortunately, the city was able to rebound through the guidance of some of its political elites. Now that we’ve gotten a brief overview of the city and its historical significance, let’s examine its political history.

Philadelphia-History-Political

\(^1\) InfoPlease.com –
http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108580.html
“The first mayor of Philadelphia, Humphrey Morrey was appointed by William Penn, Proprietor of the colony of Pennsylvania. Under the provisions of the Charter of 1701, Edward Shippen was named Mayor of Philadelphia for a one-year term. Starting in 1702, the Common Council of Philadelphia elected a Mayor from among their members. In 1776, the city government was abolished and the city functions were operated by the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania. The state government continued to run the city until a new charter for the city was granted on March 11, 1789 under an Act of Assembly approved on that date. No change in the election of the Mayor occurred from Colonial practices.

However, beginning in 1826, the Council had the right to elect any citizen of Philadelphia as Mayor, not just a member of Council. In 1839, the general electorate was first permitted to vote directly for Mayor. If no candidate won a majority of the popular vote, then the joint Councils of Philadelphia (Select and Common) would decide among the two leading candidates. John Swift became the first Mayor elected directly by the people in Philadelphia in the 1840 election.”

“On February 2, 1854, the governor of Pennsylvania, William Bigler, approved the Act of Assembly passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly. The legislation called for the Consolidation of the city and county of Philadelphia into one political and geographical unit. This Act extended the term of the mayor from one to two years. Under provisions of the Act of April 12, 1861, the election was changed to the second Tuesday in October, and the term of Mayor extended to three years. The term started on the first Monday in January.
By the State Constitution of 1873, which went into operation in January 1874, all elections for city and ward officers were changed to the third Tuesday in February. By the Act of March 10, 1875, the term of Mayor was extended from January to April. The inauguration of Mayor would be held on the first Monday of April. Under the provisions of the Act of June 1, 1885 (known as the Bullitt Bill), which reorganized city government beginning on January 1, 1887, the term reached its current length of four years.

A schedule of amendments to the State Constitution approved on November 2, 1909 extended the term of Mayor from the first Monday in April to the first Monday in December. An Act of March 2, 1911 provided that the term of Mayor shall hereafter begin on the first Monday in January following their election.

The City Charters of 1919 and 1951 did not disturb the length of the term served by the Mayor. The Act of 1885 prohibited any mayor from succeeding himself. This prohibition was not lifted until the 1940s. Currently, under the terms of the Charter of 1951 (Philadelphia Home Rule Charter), a mayor may not serve more than two consecutive terms”2.

Philadelphia is one of the United States’ largest and oldest cities, to date. The city has undergone numerous changes and political “facelifts”, if you will. The city was once up for grabs between both of the major modern, political parties. However currently, the city of Brotherly love only lends its love and support to the Democratic Party. In the following section I will further illustrate this point. Along with that, I will give some

2 Philadelphia Government Site-
http://www.phila.gov/PHILS/Mayorlst.htm
possible reasons as to why this is the case in Philadelphia. In so doing, I will explain and 
incorporate the Performance and Pluralists theories of Democracy as well.

**Democratic Domination**

In 1940 Bernard Samuel was elected President of the Philadelphia City Council. However, his term in office would be cut short by the untimely passing of the mayor. In August of 1941 then mayor, Robert E. Lamberton passed away while in his second year as mayor. Samuel, as acting City Council President, was called upon to fill the seat that Lamberton left vacant upon his death. Samuel served out the rest of the Mayoral term. He then successfully ran for re-election in 1944.

After serving out his first full term, Samuel ran one final time in 1948. He eventually defeated Democratic challenger Richardson Dilworth by a comfortable margin, winning another term as mayor. In doing so, Samuel would become the longest serving mayor in Philadelphia history (a mark that still holds true today). However, at the time neither he, nor anyone else for that matter, would have guessed that he would also make history for a slightly different reason. Upon re-election Samuel would also become the last Republican to serve as mayor of Philadelphia to date.

Over the next fifty five years (and counting) the Democratic Party has taken the mayor’s office every time it’s been up for election. The city is overwhelmingly liberal/Democratic. The vast majority of Philadelphia public officials are Democrats as well. Along with that, the city is a consistent Democratic strong hold in state and national elections as well. In the recent midterm elections of 2006 Philadelphians overwhelmingly, supported the two Democrats running for the major offices within the
state. Philadelphians voted 357,057 to 67,452 in favor of Bob Casey over Republican incumbent Rick Santorum for Senate. In the governor’s race they supported incumbent Ed Rendell, 383,339 to 45,502 over Republican challenger Lynn Swann³.

**Reasons**

I think that one of the best ways to explain the actions of Philadelphia’s voters over the past fifty years comes from a theory thought up by a man named Joseph Schumpeter. The theory is called performance democracy. The main premise of this theory is that over time people have deviated from the original purpose of democracy, to seek the good of the state. According to the theory, people in modern times seek what is best for them as individuals.

People, according to Schumpeter, seek out and support those policy makers who will do what they feel is in their best interest. Voters support the politicians who offer them the most stuff. “If government performs well, that is, serves their immediate well being, then they retain it; if not, then they vote to replace it.”⁴ Schumpeter sees politicians of today as salesmen who are offering people what they think they want most. It has to him, become a competition based on who can promise the public more of the things that they want.

I certainly see this occurring in Philadelphia. Many of the citizens of here are either poor or just barely getting by. They hear many of the campaign promises and seek out the politicians who promise them an easier time making their ends meet. This affects their choice on which party to support directly, based off of each party’s

³ Committee of Seventy Philadelphia Primary Results- [http://www.seventy.org/electioninfo/results/index.html](http://www.seventy.org/electioninfo/results/index.html)

⁴ Theories of Democracy- A Reader, Ronald J Terchek and Thomas C. Conte Pg 141 paragraph 2
platforms/ideologies. Republicans tend to be conservative and democrats tend to be liberal. To further illustrate this point let me explain what both parties believe in.

**Conservatism vs. Liberalism**

First, I’ll examine modern conservatism, which can be broken down into two different types: fiscal and social. Fiscal conservatism focuses on the economy and the role that the government should play in it. Fiscal conservatives believe in the principle of small government. By this they mean that they want as little interference as possible by the federal government, in the everyday lives of American citizens. They would prefer to leave everyday, local matters up to the local governments and to the individual citizens themselves.

Fiscal conservatives believe in limited government spending on programs as well, because they believe that it stifles the economy. Their reasoning is based on the fact that in order to support governments like welfare and WIC, the government needs to tax its citizens. The more government spending or programs there are, the higher our taxes will need to be in order to fund them. The higher the taxes are the less money consumers have to spend and put back into the economy.

Fiscal conservatives believe strongly in the idea that the economy will correct itself, for the most part at least. They would rather lower or eliminate taxes than raise them. This is especially true during periods of economic depression or recession. During such periods of economic difficulty they prefer to cut unnecessary spending and programs. They feel that the money they save through this will enter into the economy and give it a boost. Fiscal conservatives will be content in waiting tough economic times
out. Unlike liberals, they trust the economy to fix itself without the government interference.

Now that I’ve explained what a fiscal conservative is I will briefly explain social conservatism. Social conservatism focuses on the issues that affect the society. They are resistant to the changes taking place in our culture. That is why they are called social conservatives. They focus on the so called, “moral values” issues that came up during the 2004 presidential campaign. Social conservatives believe that the country is sliding too far to the left and becoming morally irresponsible on a number of issues. The two biggest issues that this group focuses on are gay marriage and abortion. They have reasons for their positions.

When it comes to abortion they feel that the unborn child has the right to be protected and is a living human being. They are against homosexuals marrying for a number of reasons as well. First, they recognize that the institution of marriage has been around for thousands of years. Subsequently, they feel that it is a sacred institution that shouldn’t be tampered with. They also feel that the marriage is becoming increasingly devalued in the United States as a whole. Social conservatives feel that opening up marriage to homosexuals would force the institution further down the wrong path.

Liberals look at the issues above and develop a completely different take on them. There are two types of liberals, just as there are two types of conservatives: fiscal and social. Fiscal liberals believe in big government. They want the government to step in and be a “safety net” for the American people. They don’t mind raising taxes in order to increase spending on programs that will benefit the poor and underprivileged.
Fiscal liberals believe that it is the responsibility of the government to protect its people from economic ruin. They also feel that the government should ensure that each citizen has a shot at achieving the “American dream”. While fiscal conservatives focus on the overall health of the entire economy, they focus on the individuals within the society. Fiscal liberals are focused on ensuring that those who are less fortunate in our society will be taken care of adequately. In a city like Philadelphia that is a major concern. Subsequently, programs like social security, welfare, and affirmative action are very popular in the city, and the country for that matter.

Social liberals on the other hand focus on a different set of issues. They try to ensure that the government doesn’t allow anyone to discriminate against or infringe upon the rights of any American. They strongly oppose social conservatives on the issues of gay marriage and abortion. Social liberals believe that the issue of abortion should be left up to the woman and whomever she chooses to tell about it.

They believe that her right to privacy and her own personal choice are the important issues in the debate. They feel that the woman’s rights trump those of the unborn fetus. On the issue of gay marriage they feel that not allowing them to get married is discriminatory. They strongly oppose conservatives on this point. Another issue that both parties differ on is their approach to crime. Many liberals feel that many criminals can be rehabilitated and seek to get them counseling instead of jail time, in some cases. Conservatives prefer to throw the book at criminals. They feel that if someone breaks the law they should be punished fully for it.

Conservatives also tend to favor the death penalty more than liberals and moderates. “Republicans' and Democrats' opinions on the death penalty differ, although a
majority in both groups endorses it. Eighty percent of Republicans support the death penalty, while 65% of independents and 58% of Democrats support it. Americans who identify themselves as political conservatives are also more likely to support the death penalty than are moderates or liberals. Nearly three in four conservatives (74%) support capital punishment, compared with 68% of moderates and 54% of liberals.\textsuperscript{5}

Performance democracy, Liberalism and Philadelphia.

Now that I’ve explained the performance theory and the political ideologies of the two major parties, I will tie it all together, showing its affect on Philadelphia. First, we must realize that Philadelphia is a city in which many of its citizens are poor just barely getting. Philadelphia is a “blue collar”, working class city. Take the following statistics to further illustrate this point. Persons below poverty made up 20.1% of the population in 2003. If you compare this to the rest of the state which had only 10.6% of its citizens you see a big difference. The median household income for the city in 2003 was $30,414. The median for rest of Pennsylvania was $42,952\textsuperscript{6}.

Subsequently, many of the platforms and programs that the Democratic Party offers appeal to many Philadelphians and their needs directly. Speaking as a Philadelphian, in the city Republicans are seen as the party of the rich. They seemingly oppose every program that seeks to give the poor a chance to compete with the rich. In the city for the majority of its citizens, a vote for the Republicans is seemingly, a vote against one’s own self interest.

\textsuperscript{5} Gallup Poll-Who Supports the death penalty?- \url{http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/article.php?scid=23&did=1266}

\textsuperscript{6} IS Census Bureau- \url{http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/42/42101.html}
That is where the performance theory comes in. Philadelphians cast their vote with their own self-interest and survival in mind. There is usually very little, if any, thought given to how the entire city will be affected when one casts their vote. The democrats have gotten so popular by endorsing programs that are targeted towards the working class. Programs like social security, welfare, and affirmative action, and after school programs are very popular in the city. The democrats support these programs and the Republicans tend not to. Naturally, because of these things Philadelphia, over the last fifty years, has become a city in which only one party continues to exist.

**Pluralist Democracy**

Pluralist democracy is another theory of democracy that I feel is relevant in our discussion about Philadelphia. The theory’s main premise is that people gather together to form interest groups in order to ensure that their voices get heard. According to Arthur Bentley, the basic unit of politics is neither “the people” nor the “individual voter” but instead the group. To him people don’t really have the power to control what government does until they band together in large numbers. Once citizens attain these numbers they can start to get their complaints heard. That is certainly a noticeable truth in the city of Philadelphia.

The biggest interest groups in the city are the workers’ unions. The unions represent the working class in both Philadelphia and the rest of the country. They fight for the rights of the employees as opposed to the business interests of the executives. Union leaders have the ability to greatly influence legislation and policy within the city, by dealing with politicians directly. They have the power to arrange strikes, call for
boycotts, and give power and a voice to the working class within the city\textsuperscript{7}. Unions over the last fifty years have made a lasting affect on the city, through legislation, negotiations and organized protests. Other powerful interest groups in the city include Planned Parenthood and NOW (national organization of women).

**Critiques of democracy**

A major problem with the way things are in Philadelphia is the fact that only the elites truly have the opportunity to get their voices heard. As John Dewey, in the participatory theory of democracy points out, only the intellectual elites have the voices heard. The people with the most political clout and money are the ones who get to speak for those who have neither. If there is no one willing to step up and take on the cause of a certain group than their problems will go unheard. Case in point, the poor people in Philadelphia and the rest of the country: they have no lobby set up for them. There is no one out there actively engaging in the political process and altering/passing legislation for the interests. Unfortunately for them, their voices will continue to go unheard until that fact changes.

The performance theory of democracy offers an interesting critique of democracy, as well. The theory states that people have become interested solely in what politicians can do for them. As, a result the greater good of the society has been neglected by both: the citizens’ desire to be catered to and the politicians’ desire to fill that need. Many of the city’s problems are going unsolved because the non essential issues seem to keep taking center stage. Issues like gay marriage and abortion, although important, should never be put before issues like crime and the economy. However, that seems to be the

\textsuperscript{7}Philly Unions.com

http://www.phillyunions.com/
case in not only Philadelphia, but the entire country as a whole. It won’t be until people are ready to stop focusing on themselves and their personal biases that American Democracy will begin to flourish once more.

**The future of democracy in Philadelphia**

I’m not sure exactly what the future has for the city of Philadelphia in the future. I, just like anyone else, can only offer up my best guess as to what will happen there. If I was to guess I would offer the following hypothesis: I feel that the city will continue to be a Democratic stronghold in the future. There is a growing number of minorities in the city. Minorities overwhelmingly tend to be democrats. So because of that I feel that a Philadelphia with more blacks and Latinos will only continue to support the same ideas and issues that they do. Subsequently they will not change their party allegiance.

Another reason I feel that things will stay the same in the city is the fact that so many Philadelphians need the economic support the government currently provides. No one who is on welfare or any other government program will be willing to just give it up unless they don’t need it. People who are on welfare tend to need it badly and will support whoever will allow them to stay on this program. The Republican Party is fundamentally opposed to this program. Unless they change up their party platform they will obviously never get the support of welfare recipients.

All in all, I feel that the city will continue to keep this one party system. I think that as an unfortunate consequence of this many of the city’s problems will not be solved. Our country has become so great because of the plurality of ideas which have come from BOTH parties. If a city wants to completely shut its ears to one of our parties than it runs the risk of shutting out the solutions to many of its problems. Hopefully, Philadelphia will
change in the future, disproving my hypothesis. It is very possible that I’m misguided in
thinking that this city will continue to be under Democratic control. Who knows what
historic and life-changing events or individuals will enter the equation 50 years from
now. You never know what will happen as far as history is concerned. After all, if I were
doing this paper 50 years earlier I would be saying that Philadelphia will always be under
Republican control.
1. Committee of Seventy Philadelphia Primary Results-
   http://www.seventy.org/electioninfo/results/index.html

2. Gallup Poll-Who Supports the death penalty?- 
   http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/article.php?scid=23&did=1266

3. InfoPlease.com – 
   http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108580.html

4 IS Census Bureau-
   http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/42/42101.html

5. Philadelphia Government Site-
   http://www.phila.gov/PHILS/Mayorlst.htm

6. Philly Unions.com
   http://www.phillyunions.com/

   Theories of Democracy- A Reader: Pg 141 paragraph
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