

THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA'S
SunMUN IV

Defining Democracy:
Ross Perot, Charisma, and Conspiracy, 1992

Director Tessa Jones





Contents

Conference Policies.....	3
Equity Statement.....	3
General Conduct Policies.....	3
Sexual Misconduct Policy.....	3
Technology Policy.....	3
Photo Policy.....	4
Dress Code Policy.....	4
For all other inquiries.....	4
Letter from the Secretary General.....	5
Secretary-General, SunMUN IV.....	6
Committee Policies.....	7
Content Statement.....	7
Letter from the Director.....	8
Committee Introduction.....	10
What is the Reform Party?.....	11
Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out! Movement.....	11
Party & Political Ideology.....	12
Ross Perot, (5, -2).....	14
1992 Election.....	15
Reform Founding & 1996 Election.....	19
2000 Election & Factionalization.....	20
Media & Advertising.....	22
Media in Political Campaigning.....	24
Newspaper.....	24
Campaign Finance.....	24
Electoral College.....	25
Election Timeline.....	26
Other parties.....	26
Libertarian Party.....	26
Green Party.....	27
Committee Timeline.....	27
Questions to Consider.....	27
List of Positions.....	28
Works Cited / References / Bibliography.....	36



Conference Policies

Equity Statement

The SunMUN IV team is dedicated to creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for all delegates, staff members, and advisors. Through collaboration, open-mindedness, and diplomacy, the SunMUN IV Secretariat is committed to providing each and every participant with an equitable and positive experience.

For any questions, comments, or concerns regarding equity, please contact our Chief of Staff.

General Conduct Policies

The SunMUN IV team is dedicated to enforcing proper conduct throughout the conference weekend. This includes but is not limited to:

- Abiding by ALL hotel policies, including maintaining proper volume levels, respecting non-SunMUN IV hotel guests, use of illegal substances, underage drinking, etc.
- Being present at ALL committee sessions. If a delegate must miss a committee session, they must contact their head delegate and their committee director *immediately*.
- Delegates are expected to maintain respectful and equitable conduct towards all committee attendees and staff.

Sexual Misconduct Policy

The SunMUN IV team is dedicated to providing a safe environment for all delegates, staff members, and advisors free from discrimination on any grounds and from harassment during the conference including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal.

SunMUN IV will enforce a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment, and will treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any and all acts of sexual harassment will not be tolerated and may result in delegate excusal from the conference, with no payment refund in addition to mandatory reporting of all occurrences. An anonymous sexual harassment reporting form will be provided at the conference.

Technology Policy

SunMUN IV embraces the use of technology, however, we ask that you only use technology in committee if and when *explicitly granted permission* by your director and/or chair(s). Furthermore, the use of generative AI, including but not limited to Chat-GPT, Claude, Gemini, and Grok is expressly and explicitly forbidden in all committees. Directors reserve the right to utilize AI-detection technologies to uphold the integrity of SunMUN IV. Violators of this policy may be disqualified for a first offense.



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

Photo Policy

SunMUN IV staffers will be present at committee rooms, socials, and other SunMUN IV events in order to take photos and videos of the conference weekend. These photos will be used in SunMUN IV's closing ceremony, SunMUN IV's social media, and possibly promotional material for SunMUN IV and future iterations. For those wishing to “opt-out” of the use of their photos in promotional material only, please contact your head delegate.

Dress Code Policy

All delegates attending SunMUN IV are expected to attend committee sessions in Western Business Attire (WBA). WBA is required due to its role in creating a professional work environment conducive to debate and diplomacy. Examples of WBA are collared, button-down shirts, blouses, blazers, slacks or formal pants, pencil skirts, closed-toe professional shoes, and a tie or bowtie.

For all other inquiries

Please reach out to the SunMUN IV Secretariat:

Kayla Bello, *Secretary-General*

bello.kayla@ufl.edu

Nico Mendez-Arango, *Director-General*

mendezar.nicolas@ufl.edu



Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates, Faculty Advisors, and Friends,

On behalf of our Secretariat, it is my absolute pleasure to invite you to the fourth iteration of the University of Florida's collegiate Model United Nations conference: SunMUN IV. We are thrilled to welcome you back to Orlando — where diplomacy, creativity, and connection come to life.

My name is Kayla Bello, and I am honored to serve as this year's Secretary-General. After welcoming you last year as the USG of General Assembly, I am beyond excited to lead this next chapter of SunMUN. The joy I've found traveling the country, building lifelong friendships, and pushing myself in every committee room is what brought me to this role. I've grown not just as a delegate, but as a teammate, a friend, and a person—and I hope this conference helps every delegate do the same. This year is about building on all we've done before, while laying the groundwork for what SunMUN can become in the years ahead.

SunMUN IV will feature eight creative and challenging committees designed to meet a wide range of interests and delegate styles. Our General Assembly will explore the global implications of conflict on culture and the environment. Our Specialized Body, the Global Parliament of Mayors, gives delegates the chance to imagine how local power can drive global change. Our Crisis offerings span from an alternative timeline of political reform, to a festival-era Woodstock simulation, to a Pokémon-themed simulation unlike any other. We're also featuring a committee on the rise of K-pop, a historical dive into an alternate Congress of Vienna, and a creative, high-pressure Ad Hoc for those ready to take on the unknown.

We are proud to return to a beautiful hotel venue just steps from Disney Springs, solidifying our place as one of the most exciting and welcoming conferences in the Southeast. Whether you spend your night exploring downtown Orlando, joining in on in-hotel festivities, or walking through Disney Springs™ with new friends, we promise something for everyone.

But SunMUN is more than a location or committee list—it's a chance to grow. As someone who's competed in General Assembly for years, I know the pressure that comes with giving your all in a committee room. But I also know the joys that come with it: the chance to surprise yourself, to grow in ways you didn't expect, and to connect with others who willingly spend their weekends debating fictional scenarios, rewriting history, and building a better world — one resolution at a time. Whether this is your first conference or your twentieth, we hope SunMUN reminds you why you fell in love with Model UN in the first place.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kayla Bello".

Kayla Bello

Secretary-General, SunMUN IV



Committee Policies

Content Statement

This committee includes positions ranging across many radical views of political ideology. While you should acknowledge your character's beliefs, we will absolutely not tolerate any racism, xenophobia, sexism, or any other form of discrimination or hateful rhetoric targeted towards any group. We appreciate your understanding and trust you will use your discretion and maturity when navigating these topics. Characters' views may be worked around at times, and alliances can form pragmatically.



Letter from the Director

Hi Delegates!

My name is Tessa Jones and I will be your director for “Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, and Conspiracy, 1992” crisis committee! I am beyond excited for a weekend of 90s vibes- Seinfeld, Larry King Live, rollerblades, and baby tees- as you all work to bring this committee to life through your innovative ideas and lively debate! When I first learned about the Reform Party I was blown away by Perot’s mystique and this unlikely group of misfits that banded behind his legacy. As I began learning more about this moment in American history, I was awed at how seemingly miniscule events or miscommunications had the power to determine the party’s story, and thus the larger story of US democracy. I look forward to exploring these possibilities together! With this committee I want to revisit the most successful 3rd party in American electoral history and allow your committee to mold the political, cultural, and economic goals of this newly emerged party, and hopefully nation.

Before we get further into it, here is a little about me! I am a junior majoring in History and Political Science with a minor in Spanish here at the University of Florida. This will be my third year with UFMUN and third SunMUN, staffing and serving on last year’s secretariat as USG of Delegate Affairs, and last year I had the pleasure of directing for GatorMUN XXII. When coming up with the idea for this committee I wanted something that would combine political glamour with my love of history- and maybe inspire some existential questions about the onus of the US electoral system! Through my experiences traveling all over the east coast competing on UF MUN’s travel team I have developed a fondness for crisis. I love the fast pace debate, chaotic updates, theatrics, and creative writing of crisis notes. With this alternate universe, I wanted to leave it more open ended to allow you, as a delegate, to exercise your imagination and create meaningful impact, front room and back room, but always be on the lookout for surprises!

Historically, the party failed to unite and mobilize the public in the 2000s presidential election, and there is a strong argument to be made here that this was a foundational shift in political obligation for politicians on both sides of the aisle. Instead of earning your vote, from 2000 on a party must simply be the lesser of two evils, and blame the voter for a candidate losing, rather than the other way around. I hope you will be able to put your differences aside and expand into new alliances and voter demographics, as you surely will need all the support you can get to challenge the establishment. Know I’m rooting for you!

As a director I value well thought-out creativity and diplomacy. If you include a detailed plan of who, what, how, why, where, and when in your notes you are much more likely to succeed. As this is a historical committee, I trust that each of you will treat



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

topics of this committee with sensitivity, an open mind, and a responsible attitude. That being said, good luck to all of you in your preparations and performances as you embody your position! Please reach out to me at tj.jones@ufl.edu if you have any questions or concerns about this committee. My brain is open for you all to pick, and good luck!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tessa Jones'.

Tessa Jones

Director, Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, and Conspiracy



Committee Introduction

This committee will operate on a dual-pad crisis note system with directive style front-room operating at a 30-45 minute cycle. The mechanics of this committee will largely mirror a traditional crisis committee. Delegates will control the actions of the Reform Party and receive periodic briefs on voting statistics and funding in crisis updates. To allow for nuanced and detailed reporting, each update will involve data such as visual CNN Gallup polling comparing the various political candidates.

As this committee revolves largely around the electoral cycle, the timeline provided later on will represent when presidential and midterm elections occur in room. However, understand that I am only human and due to unpredictable circumstances this schedule may be altered, but we will figure it out together. Furthermore, while presidential nominees can come from in-room positions or other historical figures, due to the inherent popularity advantage of certain characters over another, please do not equate a presidential nomination with placing.

While party funds may be allotted from a variety of sources, the Presidential Election Campaign Fund was introduced in 1966 to provide federal funding to parties in order to prevent overreliance on individual contributions or special-interest groups for financing. Every 1040 US income tax return contains a small box containing the presidential election campaign fund checkoff, where each citizen is provided the option to voluntarily contribute \$3 of their federal taxes towards the fund. This program is administered by the FEC and accounts for \$10s of millions in campaign finance every election cycle in this time period.

Presidential Election Campaign

Check here if you, or your spouse if filing jointly, want \$3 to go to this fund. Checking a box below will not change your tax or refund.

You Spouse

Republican and Democratic nominees receive a fixed amount of checkoff dollars automatically. Minor party candidates- defined as those receiving between 5-25% of the popular vote in the previous presidential election- earn a grant. The sum of this allotment is determined from the ratio of the party's percent of the popular vote in the prior presidential election

compared to the average popular vote of the two major party candidates in the election. More on this below, but the emphasis here lies on the positive correlation between federal election funding and performing well in polls. Expect updates on your entitlement in crisis updates following an election!



What is the Reform Party?

Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out! Movement

This movement began in the 1990s when community member Jack Gargan was abhorred with the state of money in politics, specifically campaigning. He felt candidates of both major parties had become far more accountable to their finances than the actual American public, and started a grassroots petition that evolved into a functioning movement. His call to action was initially to remove every single incumbent. Using almost no personal money, Gargan was eventually able to garner over 100,000 signatures and raise over 1.1 million dollars. Concentrated in NYC (fact check), this brought the issue of money in politics into the field of public consciousness and catalyzed the coordinated public outrage that eventually facilitated the movement to balance the federal budget.

Perhaps most remarkable of the movement that eventually gave rise to the Reform Party, Gargan was able to demonstrate that an extremely efficient, locally organized campaign *could* work as an effective means to garner public support- and transfer that support to the polls. As pictured in the demographic below, Gargan was able to garner 4,000 votes per dollar spent. If Joe Biden ran his 2020 presidential campaign with the same efficiency, he would have accumulated a total of 728 *billion* votes.

Candidate	Funds	Voters per dollar	Votes
Jack Gargan, Tampa city council, 1974	\$0.40	4,000	1,600
Joe Biden, president, 2020	\$950,000,000 (\$182,000,000 adjusted for inflation)	(4,000)	728,000,000,000

1995 Reform Party Founding

The Reform Party was officially founded in 1995 by Texas businessman Ross Perot, who had run as an independent presidential candidate in 1992 and attracted nearly 19% of the popular vote, putting up the strongest third-party showing since Theodore Roosevelt in 1912. Perot and his supporters also argued that both Democrats and Republicans were corrupt, beholden to special interests, and unwilling to deal honestly with issues like the national debt, government waste, and political ethics. The party's creation reflected widespread frustration with the two-party system in the 1990s.



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

Gargan's slogan "Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out" expressed this mood. It channeled anger at career politicians who claimed to serve the people while cutting backroom deals, expanding deficits, and ignoring voter concerns. Supporters of the Reform Party wanted to remove these entrenched figures and replace them with leaders committed to fiscal responsibility, government transparency, and accountability.

By linking itself to this anti-establishment spirit, the Reform Party positioned itself as a populist alternative to traditional politics. While the party briefly gained traction it struggled with internal divisions and gradually lost influence. Still, its founding and rhetoric reflected a broader 1990s wave of voter disillusionment and desire to "throw the rascals out" of Washington.

When Perot finally founded the Reform Party in 1995, its first headquarters was set up in Dallas, his home city and business base. The Texas city symbolized Perot's strong personal influence on the party's early years and gave the organization a high-profile starting point. However, over time the location of the National Reform Headquarters became incredibly controversial and the topic of much internal debate as their factionalism increased.

Michigan's Reform Party became one of the most active and visible state organizations. Michigan's prominence was partly due to its politically diverse electorate, industrial decline, and openness to third-party messages about jobs, trade, and government accountability. The state was seen as a battleground where a strong third party could gain traction with working-class voters.

Party & Political Ideology

Due to the unique political messaging of the party, I find it will be useful to give a brief glimpse into the spectrum of political ideology in order to ensure everyone is on the same stage. The ideological spectrum could best be simplified as communism on the far left, and fascism on the far right, however; it would be impossible to summarize its full complexities in one sentence, or even one overview. Communism and fascism are the logical conclusions of maximizing equality or freedom, respectively.

On the far right of the spectrum lies fascism, an authoritarian and nationalist ideology centered on hierarchy, expansion, and strict social order. Unlike liberal democracy, fascism rejects equality, individual rights, and pluralism.

On the far left is communism in its pure ideological form: a stateless, classless society where resources are collectively owned and shared. In theory, orthodox Marxism abolishes bourgeois private property (accumulated capital/means of production) and



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

1990s, college-aged voters leaned more Republican, while a gender-gap has begun to form with women leaning more Democratic. Black and Latino voters strongly prefer this party.

The Republican party, or GOP, broadly aligns with conservatism. They emphasize reduced government spending and regulation, lower taxes, a strong military, internationalism, are anti-abortion, anti-communist, and seek to uphold traditional social/family values. In the 1990s, the party drew its support increasingly from rural and suburban areas, as well as evangelical voters. Whites make up the overwhelming majority of Republican voters, but Asian demographics are also an important supporting group, despite casting their ballots more split.

Thus, the Reform Party, as a 'centrist' party, occupies a unique and often unstable position as various members attempt to advance their own political agendas and radicalize the party. They are often described as "socially progressive and fiscally conservative".

Ross Perot, (5, -2)

Ross Perot, born June 27, 1930, was a man composed of intense charisma and a uniquely fascinating aura. After attending a Naval academy in Texarkana, Texas, he entered the world of IBM sales where his magnetism served him well. Soon, he was bringing in record numbers that skyrocketed him into becoming the 3rd wealthiest person in America, friends with Henry Kissinger. His right-hand man was Russ Verney, and the two worked closely together and had a deep trust.

He has always been uncompromisingly straight up about his beliefs, despite how outlandish some of his convictions were. He was extremely prone to paranoia and conspiracy, including suggesting that the North Vietnamese, Texan drug lords, and Black Panthers hired 5 men to kill him in the middle of the night. He was obsessed with micromanagement and easily spooked by claims most would



understand to be false, making it clear over time he could be talked into anything so long as he thought someone was out to get him. Yet despite these character flaws, he was



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

undoubtedly a highly intelligent, down to earth man, evidenced by his trustworthy, old Chevy. Just as unquestionable was his intense love for television.

Physically, he stood at a mere 5'5 and had massive ears- a feature heavily represented in political cartoons. He has an incredible 'it' factor, the uncanny ability to grab attention and never quell his outspoken spirit. Prior to the 1992 election, he had never entered the American political machine, which, combined with his wealth and personality, made him an ideal candidate to carry on the grassroots movement Gargan sparked in 1990/91. Yet, when Gargan begged him to run for president he refused. In a CNN interview, Larry King asked Perot to run for president and Perot responded by saying if the people really wanted him to run they would register him in all 50 states.

1992 Election

Perot combined the anti-corruption, anti-establishment with his own rationalist perspectives and electric presence to almost accidentally form a political movement in the 1992 election against Bush and Clinton. Both men were widely viewed as establishment figures: Bush, as the sitting president and former vice president; and Clinton, as the Democratic standard-bearer. Neither the GOP or Dems would challenge the military industrial complex or corporations, and Perot highlighted how the gap between these two candidates was much smaller than it appeared as they both sought to uphold the status quo.

February 20, 1992, after an interview on *Larry King Live*, Perot said he would run if the people really wanted him to, and this meant "ordinary people" registering him in all 50 states by collecting enough signatures on petitions. He rejected any donation over \$5, saying he would personally fund his campaign, and grassroots movements succeeded in granting him ballot access in all 50 states, as well as Washington DC.

Using almost exclusively television, he rose to prominence on a crusade to balance the budget, polling 24% in April 1992 (Bush 44%, Clinton 25%) when he hadn't even officially declared himself a candidate. Yet, his charisma and ability to appeal to the masses as a logical and caring businessman brought him early success. In a particular interview, he is quoted as saying "We can't spend our children's money. Don't we love our children as much as our parents love us?"- a message that resonated with voters on both sides of the aisle.

In May 1992, Perot had managed to tie Bush around 35%. Incredibly, a man that *still* hadn't officially entered the race was sitting neck and neck with the standing POTUS. Furthermore, he still didn't have positions on any issue other than campaign finance reform and balancing the budget, however; he was unambiguously pro choice. This



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992



scared the GOP as they felt pro-choice republicans would be drawn into Perot's growing support base. (Salt lake tribune) Perot's success continued strongly until June, achieving 38% of popular vote while Bush pulled 30% and Clinton 26%. In July he had a slight fall back, and the three candidates were about even.

May- texas gets over 200,000 signatures, they needed 53,000, all credit to followers. Hero called to the people, not in

Yet, July 10, 1992, Perot got his first taste of political failure. Attending an NAACP rally, he referred to the majority African American audience as "you people" many times, offending the crowd and revealing his lack of effort to connect with black Americans. As a result, he dropped to the least popular of the three candidates, and here we begin to see the initial signs of Perot's psychological unwindings. He established a blacklist of coolers meant to monitor for traitors as his paranoia grew as he saw the poll numbers falling.

Surprisingly, Perot dropped out of the presidential election on July 16, 1992, claiming a variety of reasons: campaigning got too complicated, he was planning to raise taxes and didn't want to drop the news, thought Clinton took his prochoice vote, he hated his advisors, saw his staff as inadequate, didn't like campaign adds, and didn't like sending flyers because he hated junk mail. Yet, the real reason for his July drop out was revealed in October. Scott Barnes, a peddler with a well-known reputation for lying (including lying to Congress under oath), told Perot that he had been hired by Bush to digitally fabricate and distribute images painting his daughter as a lesbian and stage a protest at her upcoming wedding. Additionally, he claimed to work for the CIA and uncovered Bush was bugging his phone and plotting with them to hack into Perot's stocks. Despite the known untrustworthiness of Barnes, for some reason Perot believed these claims fully. Bush denied them all.

Ultimately, Perot was out of the race for 10 weeks, and despite this, was still polling 16% in September as no longer a candidate. He set up a call number September 30th to hear



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

the people's voices, and got over half a million calls in the first hour from citizens telling him to jump back in. Seems he just needed to hear some encouragement, and Perot reenters the election in October- debate season. October 1st, he bought a 30 minute Friday slot on CBS right before the National League Baseball playoff game for \$380,000, which he spent simply sitting at a desk and talking about charts he himself had created. This reached 16.5 million viewers. This was so successful that he bought another Friday slot on ABC and reran the same video.

While the other candidates, especially Bush, obsessed over the minute details and logistics of the debates, Perot didn't even practice for the first debate, held October 11 in St. Louis. Despite this, his charm allowed him to make many jokes, often positioning himself as rising above the other two candidates and holding for applause while his speaking time was running. A poll revealed that a strong plurality of voters (43%) felt Perot won the debate, while only 31% voted Clinton and 19% for Bush. Clinton won the second debate, yet 37% of voters felt Perot won the third and final debate while the other candidates tied at 28%. Thus, Gallup polls found Perot's support base was sitting at 19% in late October.

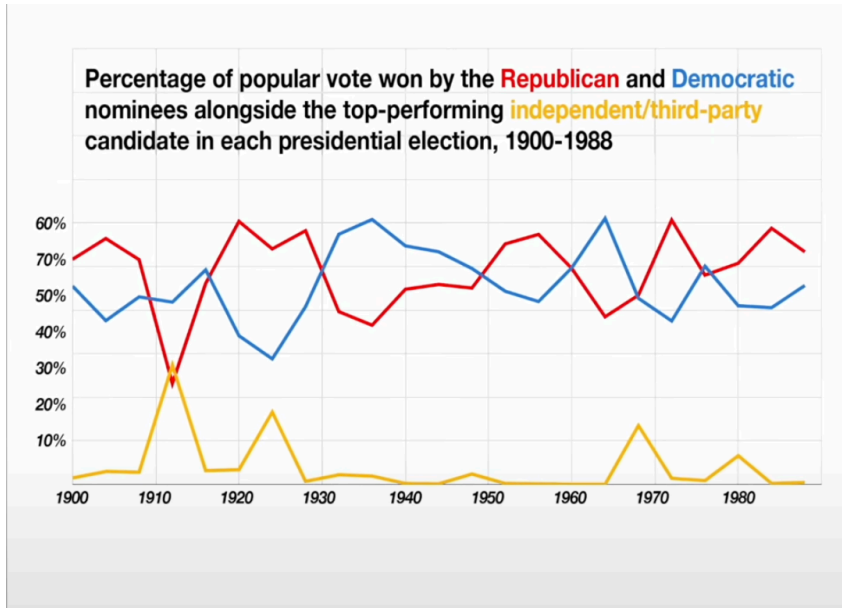


Finally, Perot gained a total of 18.9% of the American popular vote-or almost 20 million people- in the 1992 election showing. He didn't come close to carrying any state and got 0 electoral votes, while Clinton took the ticket at 43% and 370 electoral votes, beating Bush' 37.5% and 168 electoral votes. While he lost the election, Perot remarkably achieved the strongest third party performance since FDR in

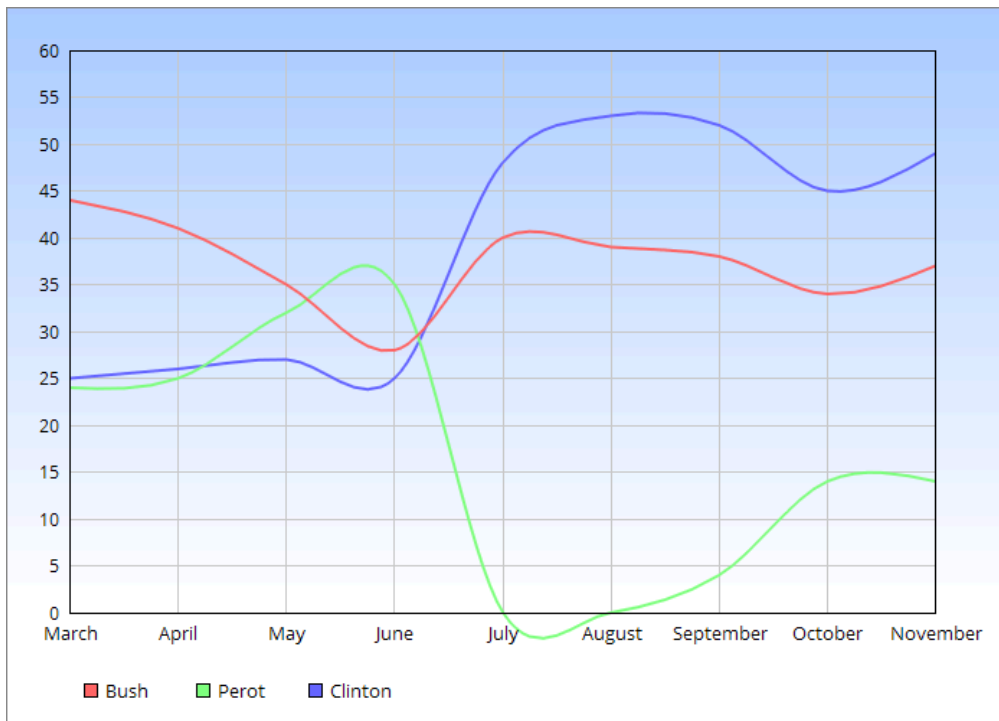
1912 and showed the power of an outsider, populist sentiment that would continue to reshape American politics.



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992



18.9% was enough to surpass the 5% requirement for Federal Matching Funds, and Perot got \$29 million in grants for the 1996 election, with the limitation he could only spend 50k of his own money. As he did not run under a party, there was a question of whether Perot could even transfer these funds or if they must go towards himself. He began exploring the possibility of running someone other than himself, and realized he would need to formalize a party to continue the ongoing transfer of matching funds.



By Devin2601 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,



Reform Founding & 1996 Election

The committee will begin following the 1994 midterms.

In August 1995 Perot was asked about forming a third party and responded that it required too much time and work. He said politics was an irrational system while business was rational, adds up, and makes sense. Clearly, his experience in 1992 left a hatred for politics in the Texas billionaire, and he called the entire process stupid.

In September, one month later, Perot announced he was forming a political party on *Larry King Live*. He called it the Independence Party, then changed it to the Reform Party, then Independence Reform Party, then decided they would be the Independence Party in most states and Reform in states where the name 'independence' was taken. After much debate, he officially named it the Reform Party nationally- and Independence Party in a few states. As evidenced by the various name changes, the party had faced its first challenge of deciding a NAME and was already faceplanted.

Perot searched for presidential candidates that would become a "George Washington II", entertaining Bill Bradley and Colin Powell, but neither were interested. Richard Lamm sought the Reform ticket on a platform of raising the retirement age to 70, taking benefits from veterans, and slashing social security.

Unable to find a proper candidate, Perot entered the presidential race on July 12, 1996. In fact, it turned out he was unable to transfer the matching funds anyway, and was hoarding the party mailing lists. He proceeded to run a 'cocoon campaign', holding no



rallies and only talking to voters on TV, yet the media industry's rapid growth in this time made it where he was unable to buy the timeslots he wanted for his ads. He ran a small and poorly planned campaign, often telling voters to get lost and that he doesn't need them. When debate season arrived, he lacked the 15% polling required to enter debates.

In the final 1996 election results Bill Clinton beat Republican nominee Bob Dole for the presidency, yet Perot achieved 8.4% of the popular vote. Termed irrelevant and desperate, it



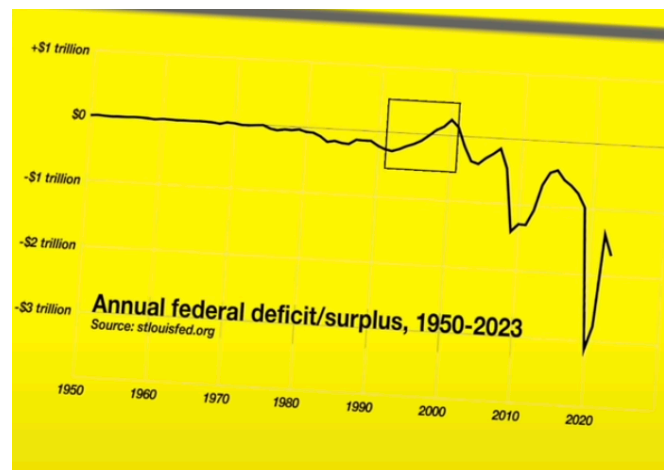
Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

was still an incredible achievement to get 8 million votes without even trying. And, importantly, he achieved over 5% of the popular vote as a Reform Party candidate, earning 12.6 million in matching funds *and* allowing these funds to be transferred to someone else under the Reform Party name.

2000 Election & Factionalization

Between the 1996 and 2000 election, many interesting characters from all sides of the political and ideological spectrum were drawn into the party, entranced by the possibility of gaining access to the 12.6 million USD in matching funds. This caused the already splintering Reform Party to split into two sides, one based in Dallas and the other in Minnesota. Further exacerbating this internal crisis, the federal deficit was eliminated by the 2000 presidential election, forcing the party to redefine its central message and goals.

The two main opposing sides within the party were led by far-right Buchanan and Ventura who attempted to maintain the party's socially progressive values. Ventura saw Buchanan's sliminess from a mile away, and refused to be in the party with a man he saw as revolting and a disgusting excuse for a human being. Perot, lacking the political savvy, ignorantly endorsed Buchanan as the Reform candidate for the 2000s presidential election, unknowingly



letting a wolf into the henhouse- a mistake he would only realize when it was far too late. Ventura's anti-Buchanan coalition (supported by the party's moderate/centrist wing) eventually threw their nomination behind Dr. Hagelin, physicist and Natural Law Party leader.

Party members either pragmatically supported one candidate over another, or supported Hagelin while arguing that Buchanan's agenda opposed Perot's founding reformist agenda. This conflict came to a head in the chaotic 2000s Reform Party National Convention in Long Beach, California, continuing their long precedent of police intervention at party meetings. In fact, even before the convention began there was drastic infighting and arguing over simply *where* and *when* to hold the meeting, as the venue's location would effect the turn out of the various factions within the party, thus directly impacting the vote to chose their presidential nominee. Furthermore,



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

Reform conventions *always* have technical malfunctions, such as signs falling, the microphone falling, the podium falling, etc.

In February of 2000 the party held a convention in Nashville airport Marriott ballroom with approximately 140 members (the convention they held to decide where they would hold the Nomination National Convention). After introductions, the factions immediately broke into yelling, fighting, and chanting until eventually 8 police officers intervened to restore order. Gargan repeated into the microphone that the meeting violated procedure and was illegal, but a faction of loyal Buchananites bullied him from the stage- signalling an important shift in leadership. Verney, replacing Buchanan, then changed party rules so anyone present in the upcoming primaries could vote, not just official party members, as well as refused to hand the party's bank accounts, financial records, and meeting minutes over to Buchanan.

At that moment, the Reform party movement truly began to die. The rush for money and combination of desperate fringe candidates- fascists, communists, moderates, weirdos, created optimal conditions for infighting, thievery, lies, copcalling, and self annihilation. As the presidential election neared, the divisions only hardened. Buchanan quickly began attending smaller Reform conventions and ousted anyone not loyal to him. Minnesota disaffiliated, as well as Alabama and Wisconsin. Some even try to redraft Perot out of desperation.



Perot never responded to his invitation to the Reform National Convention in Long Beach, California, August, 2000. At the conference, 30 minutes of pointing and yelling about procedure erupted and an attendee grabbed the microphone and called out party National Secretary, Jim Mangia, and Jerry Moan does

nothing to stop this and walks out. At this moment, Buchanan was polling at 1% out of



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

his small, bigoted support base, yet he was officially voted party nominee for the 2000 election. In protest Hagelin and Mangia took their supporters next door and threw their *own* convention. Thus, two simultaneous Reform Party conventions coexisted, one led by Buchanan, the other by Hagelin, but both claiming they were the authentic party and entitled to the 12.6 million in grants.

The Hagelin faction filed a complaint with the FEC saying they deserved the matching funds. Perot finally realized the danger of Buchanan and threw his support in for this group, but it didn't matter. The funds were ultimately to go to Buchanan. He had successfully completed a hostile party takeover and coup by utilizing their loosely constructed party rules. Hagelin still ran under the Natural Law banner. In November, Perot officially left the Reform Party to never be seen in US politics again, even as Buchanan dropped to *below* 1%.¹

Hackensack Record, 10/1/2000

Rating the presidential candidates

Poll respondents were asked if they recognized the name of each candidate. If they did, they were asked for their opinion of that candidate.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Don't recognize
Al Gore	52%	37%	11%	0%
George W. Bush	39%	43%	18%	0%
Ralph Nader	47%	28%	13%	12%
Pat Buchanan	13%	61%	24%	2%

For the final 2000 election, Gore won the popular vote while Bush won the electoral college, making him the 43rd president of the US. Buchanan got 448,895 total votes, some later discovered as a result from ballot misprint/illegibility in specific counties. Each 1,000 votes cost him \$28,000 based on campaign efficiency. He drove the party into the ground, and then abandoned them completely. All that remained was a far-right Reform legacy that the party would struggle to expel for the following two decades.

Media & Advertising

Television aptly replaced radio for broadcast media in the late 20th century. By 1992, 60% of American households observed cable TV, while non-network programming contracted 30% of public viewership. 7 in 10 Americans reported getting their news from television in 1991, viewing almost 7 total hours of programming a day. Three private networks- NBC, CBS, and ABC, retained 90% of the TV market until the 70s. Fox Broadcasting Company was founded in 1986 by Rupert Murdoch and began stealing viewers from the three established servicers, eventually reaching almost all US

¹ We know it is less than 1% bc a CNN USA Today Gallup poll, the most recognized and used public election polling from this time, found in a 11/4/2000 poll that 0 supported Buchanan. 0 out of 2132 voters surveyed selected Buchanan. 0 voters with 12.6 million spent and months campaigning. Humiliating defeat (bush 48%, Gore 42%, Nader, 5%)



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

households by 1994. In 1995 yet another two national networks arose to challenge established companies, Warner Bros Television Network and the United-Paramount Network (UPN).

Public US TV stations are divided to serve 4 regional areas- Eastern, Central, Southern, and Pacific Mountain. All public TV is operated by three national companies: Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to funnel federal funding into independent producers/stations, PBS (rip) (which operates a satellite system that links all public TV stations, and the National Association of Public Television Stations (NAPTS), which helps provide resources to member TV stations. Through the CPB, U.S. taxpayers provide 19 percent of the funding for public television, which amounted to about \$250 million in 1991.

These traditional networks that dominated the American TV network in the early 1990s experienced a notable decline in viewership as more and more people transitioned to cable. This was accompanied by an explosion of specialized networks, such as HGTV, the Comedy Channel, the Food Network, and much more. In the late 1990s the average subscriber had over 50 channels. One of the drastic effects this had on society was the end of the common ritual of Americans watching the same programs as consumers were given more options to choose from. The broad, cultural consensus that defined early television was replaced by fragmenting individual viewing habits and dramatically increased the number of media outlets available, such as MSNBC and FOX joining CNN as major channels. This period also saw the rise of sitcoms, gritty dramas, and reality TV. Additionally, another major impact was the merging of traditional news with entertainment programs, such as Comedy Central's launch of their satirical show *Politically Incorrect*. However, this increased broadcasting also far increased the public's awareness of press scandals.

In an era in which TV is clearly the glamour medium, the reach of radio was still impressive. Ninety-nine percent of American households in 1991 had at least one radio; the average is five a household. Every day, radio reached 80 percent of the U.S. population at one time or another. In 1991, the number of U.S. commercial radio stations had grown to 4,987 AM stations and 4,442 FM stations. Most of these stations are affiliated with one of four national networks: the American Broadcasting Company, Columbia Broadcasting System, the National Broadcasting Company and the Mutual Broadcasting System. Public stations are run by universities and public authorities for educational purposes and financed by public and/or private funds, subscriptions, and some underwriting. In 1991, more than 12 million Americans listened each week to 430 public radio stations affiliated with National Public Radio (NPR), a national, non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C.



Media in Political Campaigning

The increased variety and prevalence of media outlets available became utilized by campaigns to shape and spread their message. Perot's flip presentation in the 1992 election cycle provides an excellent example of this from his repeated appearances on CNN's *Larry King Live*. However, traditional campaigning was still very involved in sending pamphlets, call centers, and volunteer networks.

Televised attack ads became commonplace in the mid-late 1990s, even as they grew more and more aggressive. Parties more frequently began relying on messaging that capitalized on voter resentment and outrage, especially by emphasizing party divisions. Campaigns also crafted targeted ads for certain voter demographics.

Newspaper

While television swept the nation by storm, periodicals, such as the Chicago Tribune, still retained a far outreach base and a reliable source of print media. Their reach steadily declined from the mid 1990s, only to be accelerated as technology became more and more accessible. Print sources are often trusted for their credibility in a way that broadcast news isn't. Furthermore, those that continued to buy print were often higher income, a valuable audience to advertisers.

Campaign Finance

The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971, strengthened in 1974 after Watergate, was the first comprehensive attempt to regulate federal campaign finance. It imposed limits on contributions and expenditures, created mandatory disclosure of contributions and spending, and established the Federal Election Commission (FEC) in 1975 as the independent agency charged with enforcing campaign finance law. In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), the Supreme Court upheld FECA's contribution limits and disclosure requirements but struck down limits on candidates' personal spending and independent expenditures, framing such spending as a protected form of political speech. This decision opened the door to greater use of candidate loans and self-financing.

FECA banned contributions from corporations, labor unions, government contractors, and foreign nationals. Foreign money was strictly prohibited in federal elections. Corporations and unions could instead establish separate segregated funds in Political Action Committees (PACs), which expanded rapidly under FECA. PACs were organized by corporations, labor unions, trade associations, and ideological groups to raise and



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

bundle contributions from members. Within FECA's limits, a PAC could contribute up to \$5,000 per candidate per election. By the late 1970s and 1980s, PACs had become a dominant force in campaign fundraising, providing candidates with a steady stream of legal, regulated money at a time when overall campaign costs were rising.

Individuals could give no more than \$1,000 per candidate per election, \$5,000 annually to a PAC, \$20,000 annually to a national party committee, and \$25,000 in total to federal committees per year. By contrast, soft money emerged as a growing loophole in the 1980s and 1990s. Because FECA only regulated contributions made directly to candidates, parties began soliciting unlimited donations for so-called "party-building activities," such as voter registration and issue advocacy. These funds, often raised from corporations and wealthy donors, allowed parties to indirectly support candidates and fueled escalating fundraising through the 1990s and pushed the system towards reform in the 2000s.

All candidates, PACs, and parties were required to file regular reports with the FEC, detailing the name, address, occupation, and employer of anyone contributing over \$200 in an election cycle. Expenditures also had to be itemized. These reports were made public to ensure transparency and accountability. The FEC conducted mandatory audits of all campaigns that accepted public financing through the Presidential Election Campaign Fund. Audits reviewed compliance with spending limits, use of public funds, and proper disclosure. Non-publicly financed campaigns could also be audited if complaints were filed or irregularities appeared in reporting.

Electoral College

The Electoral College is the system the United States uses to formally elect the President and Vice President. Its main purpose is to translate the popular vote in each state into electoral votes, giving smaller states a proportional influence in presidential elections. While it acts as a check on a purely direct popular vote, electors almost always vote according to their state's popular vote.

The structure of the Electoral College is based on the total number of a state's congressional delegation. Each state receives a number of electors equal to its Senators (always 2) plus Representatives in the House. Washington, D.C. is also allocated 3 electors, even though it has no voting Representatives or Senators. In total, there are 538 electors, meaning a candidate needs 270 electoral votes to win the presidency.

Most states use a winner-take-all system, awarding all their electors to the candidate who wins the most votes in the state. Maine and Nebraska use a proportional method, allocating some electors based on congressional district results to go 'purple'. Citizens do not vote directly for the President; they vote for a slate of electors pledged to a candidate. These electors then formally



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

cast their votes in December, and Congress officially counts them in early January to declare the winner.

If no candidate reaches the required 270 electoral votes, the Constitution provides a contingency: the House of Representatives selects the President, with each state delegation casting one vote, while the Senate selects the Vice President if necessary.

Election Timeline

There are three types of elections: general elections, primary elections, and special elections.

In general elections, citizens vote for federal, state, and local officials on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Federal officials are U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives to Congress. State officials are Governor, Lieutenant Governor, General Assembly, Attorney General, Auditor General, and State Treasurer. Local officials are city officials, judges, and magisterial district judges. Municipal elections occur when local elections do not coincide with federal or state elections.

Primary elections are when a party selects a candidate for a General Election, and this process differs by state as Article I, section 4 of the US Constitution gives individual states the right to decide when and how elections are conducted. These elections differ from caucuses, which also determine nominees for political parties but are party-run and subject to different rules than elections.

Special elections can occur if a candidate can no longer serve and needs a replacement. These can be held during a general election, primary election, or a different date designated by the elections office.

Other parties

Libertarian Party

Between 1992 and 2000, the Libertarian Party (LP) steadily grew as the most prominent third party advocating for limited government, individual liberty, and free-market principles. In the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections, its candidates—Andre Marrou and Harry Browne—focused on reducing taxes, ending government overreach, and protecting civil liberties, appealing to disaffected conservatives and independents frustrated with the two major parties. The party emphasized personal freedom, non-interventionist foreign policy, and deregulation while strengthening its state-level infrastructure and ballot access by running candidates in local, state, and congressional races. Though it never captured more than about 0.5–1% of the national vote, the LP



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

influenced debates on taxation, privacy, and individual rights, and by 2000, under Browne's second run, had solidified its place as the leading minor party promoting classical liberal principles, even as it remained electorally marginal.

Green Party

In 1995, the Green Party focused on environmental protection, social justice, and grassroots democracy while seeking to expand its political presence. Ralph Nader's (-4,-7) candidacy brought national attention as he emphasized consumer rights, ecological sustainability, universal free healthcare, and raising the minimum wage, positioning the Greens as a progressive alternative to the two major parties.

Committee Timeline

I have provided an overview of the Reform party's rise and fall as it appears in history, partly because I find it interesting, and partly because the details of this story truly make it special. This committee will take place in between the 1992 and 1996 election, in **1994**, when the Reform party was emerging and defining its identity before the 1996 primary elections. You will first be tasked with shaping the party and running primaries ahead of the general election. We will aim to complete the 2000 election by final session.

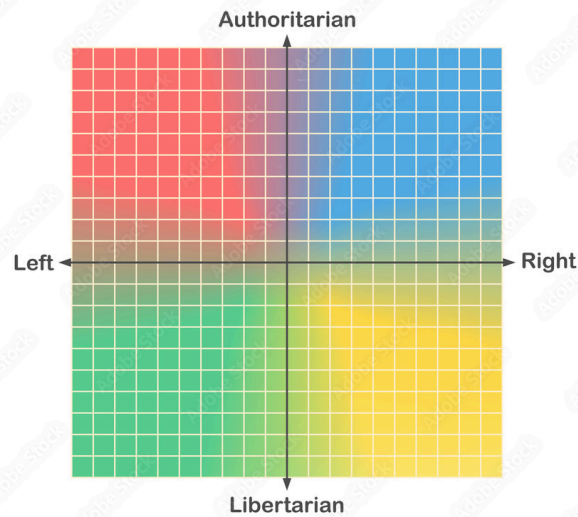
Questions to Consider

1. How can the party increase Perot's polling numbers?
2. Should the campaign focus on media, door-knocking, mail, endorsements, or some other method as its campaigning strategy?
3. What is the most optimal way to ensure and utilize federal matching funds?
4. How should the party define its platform to force concessions from major parties?
5. Are there any demographics that the party should target specifically?
6. What is the party strategy to win more seats in Congressional and local elections?
7. Are there any parties Reform could form an alliance with?
8. What is the best way to manage Perot's anxiety?
9. What is the Reform party's narrative to capture voters' imaginations?
10. How will the committee keep track of financial records for auditors while ensuring fundraising efforts remain legal?



List of Positions

Each position contains a name followed by two numbers in parentheses. These are a coordinate system to visualize where positions fall on the ideological spectrum, as seen to the right. I ask you to please try to stick to your character's ideology for continuity. This doesn't mean you can't build a wide coalition or alter your message to better appeal to certain groups, but you should not blatantly go against your character's beliefs.



1. Jack Gargan, (5,0)

- a. Gargan's activism dates back to the 1970s when he ran for Tampa City Council with only \$0.40 on his campaign, rallying support on the staunch principle of keeping money out of American politics. He believed politicians were more accountable to their financiers than voters, and founded the "Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out" movement to remove *every* incumbent from politics, regardless of party, in the name of removing money from politics. Over 100,000 Americans signed his petition, and he personally raised \$1.1 million, showcasing his organizational skills and grassroots appeal.
- b. In 1998 he ran for the House of Representatives under the Reform banner and earned 34% of the vote. He was a true believer, a man of extreme conviction, dedicating his ads to his "grandkids, their grandkids, and their grandkids", highlighting his vision and hope for long-term accountability and desire to empower all voters.

2. Jim Mangia, (-7,-9)

- a. Mangia served as the National Reform Party secretary until 1999, playing a central administrative and strategic role in the party. Openly gay, he was a dedicated LGBTQ+ activist and progressive on social issues. He originally joined Perot in the mid 90s, inspired by his message of fiscal responsibility and government accountability. He became very loyal to Perot's campaigns and used his voice to advocate for marginalized groups within the party. His identity and views led him to openly criticize Buchanan's presence in



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

the party, despite aligning on some economic and nationalist policies. He attempted to keep the party unified in times of contentious leadership battles. He further accused Gargan of dictatorial behavior and worked to oust him from the organization.

3. Jesse Ventura, (4, -5)

- a. Towering and hypermasculine, but not reactionary, Ventura earned the nickname “The Body” from his wrestling days at the WCW and WWF. He was a Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, resident and initially entered politics to protect local wetlands on the curtails of his colorful celebrity persona. A maverick. Despite defeating an 18-year incumbent in the Brooklyn Park mayoral election, he quickly became disillusioned with career politicians and occupied a position that combined libertarian-Reagonite economic views with socially progressive stances. He advocated for abortion rights, LGBTQ+ equality, more representation for people of color, as well as holding a firmly anti-war position.
- b. His unique persona and larger-than-life personality made him a good fit for leadership within the Minnesota branch of the Reform Party, despite Perot turning him down when he requested a \$20,000 loan for a campaign. He boldly clashed with those he disagreed with in the Party, despising Buchanan, until he ultimately split from Reform in early 2000. He continued as governor of Minnesota as an independent, isolated politically but holding true to his spirit of defiance, eccentricity, and uncompromising nature.

4. Russ Verney, (2, 0)

- a. Verney served as the national chairman of the Reform Party and was extremely loyal to Perot, often described as his “eyes and ears”. He served a crucial role in organizing the party and managing its daily operations in formative years, always working to protect Perot from internal rivals and external critics.
- b. More administrative than ideological, he excelled at keeping the sprawling, often chaotic, Reform coalition in line as a strategist and gatekeeper. Although he was not a headline worthy figure, he had immense influence within the party and ensured Perot’s priorities were at the forefront of their efforts.

5. Gerry Moan (1, 1)

- a. A decorated war veteran and longtime Reform Party loyalist, Gerry Moan served as chairman and a steadying figure amid the movement’s turbulence. On Long Island, he earned respect as both a POW/MIA activist and a grassroots political organizer, building a reputation for pragmatism and quiet resolve. In 1997, he staked his credibility on backing Tom Gulotta, only to be abandoned when Gulotta walked away. Later, he



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

overlooked a key rule that let Buchanan's faction seize control of the party vote—an act born less of calculation than of his instinct to keep the party alive at any cost.

- b. Moan's choices reflected his devotion, not opportunism. He loved the Reform Party even as he foresaw its collapse, refusing to tie himself exclusively to either Perot loyalists or Buchanan insurgents. Determined to hold the center, he carried out his duties faithfully and impartially, embodying the heartbreak of a man who believed the cause was doomed but remained steadfast out of love for the party he had helped build.

6. Pat Buchanan (8,9)

- a. Pat Buchanan was one of the most polarizing figures of the 1990s political landscape. A veteran of the Nixon and Reagan White Houses, he wielded insider knowledge of Washington with a ruthless, Machiavellian instinct. On television he was a constant presence, brandishing his rallying cry of "*Lock and Load*" to fire up a small but fiercely loyal base. Yet the more Americans saw of him, the less they liked him—polls showed his name recognition and disapproval rising in lockstep. Hardened, combative, and unapologetically controversial, Buchanan thrived on conflict and framed himself as the true outsider ready to "drain the swamp."
- b. Within the Reform Party orbit, Buchanan stood in sharp contrast to both Ross Perot's technocratic populism and John Hagelin's spiritual idealism. Where Perot appealed to common-sense pragmatism and Hagelin to transcendent unity, Buchanan offered grievance politics rooted in culture wars and nationalist anger. His reputation as racist, homophobic, and even flirtatious with authoritarian apologetics made him a lightning rod, yet his aggressive style and ability to rally a fervent minority ensured his presence could not be ignored especially as he attempted an administrative coup to place his loyalists in control of the national party.

7. Dr. John Hagelin, (1, -4)

- a. A Harvard-trained quantum physicist turned political figure, Dr. John Hagelin entered the national stage in the 1990s as an outsider armed with both scientific credentials and deeply unconventional beliefs. Formerly affiliated with the Natural Law Party, Hagelin sought to blend rigorous academic expertise with a spiritual vision rooted in transcendental meditation, following the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. He gained attention for his conviction that large-scale meditation could unlock a "unified field of consciousness" capable of lowering crime, reducing international conflict, and even ushering in global peace—once the square root of one percent of the world's population meditated simultaneously.
- b. Politically, Hagelin campaigned on a platform that mixed progressive reforms with unorthodox spiritual science. He advocated for aggressive



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

development of renewable energy, a total halt to pesticide use, strong restrictions on PACs and soft money, and tax relief for low-income earners through a flat tax system. His views on gun safety aligned him with mainstream reformers, while his international outlook—centered on reducing global “tension” rather than projecting military power—was more radical, framing U.S. foreign policy as immoral, hateful, and the root cause of terrorism. Although classically trained, he struggles to achieve accountability as many dismiss him for his eccentricities.

8. Lenora Fulani, (-9,-9)

- a. With an ‘it’ factor that made her as innately interesting as Perot, Fulani carved out a unique place in American political history as a relentless third-party activist. As a Marxist, she was disgusted with the Democratic Party’s treatment of Black voters, accusing it of exploiting their loyalty without delivering meaningful change. She first captured national attention during the 1988 presidential election, becoming the first woman, the first Black woman, and the first Black candidate ever to appear on the ballot in all 50 states. Running under the banner of the New Alliance Party (NAP)- an organization often described as cult-like for its insular network of therapy clinics- she combined grassroots organizing with theatrical protest, once famously interrupting a Bill Clinton campaign speech by climbing onto a chair to denounce him.
- b. Though accused of antisemitism and tied to a cult-like party structure that many viewed with suspicion, Fulani was nonetheless a skilled strategist who understood the importance of coalition-building for third parties. Most controversially, she lent support to far-right Pat Buchanan, seeing in him a chance to fracture establishment control and advance the broader cause of political independence from the two-party duopoly she despised.

9. William Clark, (0,0)

- a. William Clark was one of the most obscure figures to emerge in the Reform Party’s presidential contests. A pure centrist with no clear ideological leanings, Clark offered absolutely no stated policy positions on any record, presenting himself instead as a neutral alternative in a party divided by strong personalities and clashing visions. Professionally, Clark had a modest background in business administration and local civic work, but he never translated this into a distinct political identity or agenda.
- b. His most visible moment came when he participated in a single Reform Party debate, where his cautious, non-committal answers set him apart less for substance than for sheer lack of controversy. In a field dominated by fiery reformers, ideologues, and celebrity outsiders, Clark’s quiet presence made little impression, earning him the reputation- without ideology, without scandal, and ultimately without legacy. Yet, he



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

represents the unique presence of inclusivity within the party that appealed to so many.

10. Orson Swindle, (3, -2)

- a. Swindle is an unconventional political figure who values loyalty and personal enjoyment over professionalism. He previously was the Assistant Secretary of Commerce under Reagan and spent 6 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. A longtime friend of Perot, Swindle was obedient and intensely loyal to the short king, and was the executive director of the “United We Stand America” Reform citizen action organization and spokesperson for Perot’s 1992 presidential campaign. Under this role, he famously replaced experienced strategists with loyal friends, specifically choosing people without prior experience in their roles.
- b. He fostered a close-knit, energetic inner circle for the party, one often more focused on having fun and camaraderie than a conventional campaign strategy. This view that politics is about fun and doing what you enjoy aligns closely with Perot’s anti-establishment ethos, emphasizing engagement and enthusiasm in political participation.

11. Charles Collins, (2, 7)

- a. Collins was a Florida banker turned eccentric political figure, notorious for his peculiar habit of referring to himself in the royal “we,” as though embodying an institution. His politics leaned toward cultural conservatism, and he first drew attention for a crusade to ban children’s books in local schools that contained the word “fart.” Collins ran newspaper ads calling for the book to be banned, rallying parents to sign petitions and building a campaign on moral outrage. While the book was eventually banned, investigations revealed many of the petition’s signatures were fraudulent, and the controversy escalated into a bomb threat directed at teachers and prompting questions regarding his judgment and methods. Despite these scandals, Collins persisted in politics, as his blend of old-fashioned banker respectability and theatrical culture-war antics made him a bizarre but memorable presence.

12. Robert Bowman, (-7, -3)

- a. Robert Bowman was a retired Air Force officer turned political reformer whose unorthodox mix of ideas set him apart within the Reform Party. A staunch advocate of universal healthcare, Bowman argued that access to medical treatment was a fundamental right and one of the greatest responsibilities of government. At the same time, he called for the outright abolition of the CIA, which he believed operated without accountability and posed a threat to both American democracy and global peace. His views reflected both populist concern for ordinary citizens and deep suspicion of entrenched, secretive institutions.



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

- b. Bowman's background as a military man gave unusual weight to his criticisms of U.S. foreign policy and the national security establishment. He brought a moralistic and reformist tone to his politics, positioning himself as a truth-teller willing to confront powerful interests head-on. Though sometimes dismissed as radical, Bowman's combination of social welfare advocacy and anti-establishment skepticism embodied a strand of Reform Party politics that appealed to voters eager for bold, systemic change.

13. Ezola B. Foster, (5, 1)

- a. Foster was a longtime Los Angeles conservative activist who became aligned with Buchanan in 1996. A high school teacher at Bell High School for over three decades, she prided herself on discipline and self-reliance, often clashing with her 90% Hispanic student body over issues like opposing free lunch programs and stating undocumented immigrants shouldn't receive schooling. A staunch social conservative, she defended the police officers who beat Rodney King and wrote frequently against what she saw as the erosion of traditional values. Foster often signed her last name "Fo★", revealing her flair.
- b. Her political career was closely tied to Buchanan, achieving national recognition as Buchanan's running mate on the Reform Party ticket in September 2000. As the first Black woman on a Reform Party presidential ticket, she represented both a symbolic gesture of inclusivity and, paradoxically, a stark reflection of the party's rightward turn. Yet, the duo secured only 449,225 votes, or 0.4% of the popular vote, causing the Reform Party to lose its federal matching funds for 2004. Foster's presence underscored the contradictions of the movement: a Black woman defending far-right populism, devoted to Buchanan's cause even as the campaign hastened the party's collapse.

14. Richard "Dick" Lamm, (5,6)

- a. Nicknamed "Governor Gloom" for stating the terminally ill should hurry up and die to not burden society, he served as Colorado's governor and was known for his provocative speeches. He would assert in campus speeches that Americans were doomed unless they balanced the budget. His rhetoric was intended to shock the public as he utilized fear mongering, and tied all his views together through intense fear-based urgency. He became a polarizing figure within the party for his uncompromising will and dramatic public speeches.
- b. A former democrat, but with a weird collection of policy positions; hardline fiscal conservative, warned against the dangers of multiculturalism, and existential threat of climate change.

15. Lawrence Kraus, (0, -8)



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

- a. Kraus was a libertarian political thinker with radical ideas about restructuring the US government. He advocated for abolishing the presidency and dividing the state into 4 separate nations in an attempt to counteract entrenched bureaucracy (the deep state) and British scholars. He holds a deep skepticism of centralized power, earning the role as a controversial and provocative man within libertarian and Reform Party circles. His presence in the party further illustrates how many misfits and outsiders found a home within the stated centrist ideology of the organization as he attempted to upend conventional thinking.

16. Ken Dixon, (-4, 2)

- a. Ken Dixon was one of the Reform Party's more unusual voices, a man whose politics blended apocalyptic theology with pragmatic policy concerns. Convinced that the biblical end times were fast approaching and that the world would soon be reduced to ash and cinder, Dixon nevertheless argued forcefully against the dangers of the national debt, insisting that fiscal discipline remained a moral duty even in humanity's final days. Yet, at the same time he was an advocate for affirmative action, believing racial and social inequities demanded urgent intervention.
- b. This mix of doomsday prophecy and policy wonkery gave Dixon an eccentric but memorable presence within the party. While many dismissed his end-times rhetoric as fringe, his commitment to both economic responsibility and social justice stood out in a movement often dominated by libertarians and fiscal conservatives as he championed his cosmic visions of humanity's fate.

17. Danial Grey, (1, 1)

- a. Daniel Grey, his divine grace, was a self-described prophet that blurred politics and mysticism. Claiming spiritual authority, Grey authored a book of prophecies that he used as both a personal manifesto and a guide for his political ambitions. His rhetoric often carried a tone of religious revelation rather than policy debate, presenting himself as a visionary.
- b. His presence in the Reform Party spotlighted its unusually broad tent including technocrats, populists, celebrities, and, in Grey's case, mystics. While he was never a serious contender in terms of votes or policy development, his persona as a prophet lent him a cult-like following among a small circle of believers and made him a curiosity in the broader political landscape. Part preacher and part politician, he wholly believed his destiny and the nation's future were intertwined.

18. Erik Thompson, (-6,-5)

- a. Erik Thompson was a staunch anti-war advocate that centered his political vision on dismantling the US' role as a global superpower. He was firmly committed to slashing the military budget in half and investing those



Defining Democracy: Ross Perot, Charisma, & Conspiracy, 1992

resources domestically, drawing upon moral and financial arguments. He holds a deep skepticism of interventionism and wants foreign policy to focus on restraint, diplomacy, and disengagement from imperialism.

- b. Favoring compromise over conflict, he represents the Reform faction most critical of American militarism, a stance which places him at odds with both mainstream Democrats and Republicans. His relentless compromise on his anti-militarism underscores the party's breadth of opinion and incorporates a clear anti-establishment, anti-imperialist edge to the party. Thompson embodies authenticity: a man unwilling to bend, with a vision of an America that trades empire for humility.



Works Cited / References / Bibliography

- “File:1992 Presidential Polls.png - Wikimedia Commons.” *Wikimedia.org*, 18 Aug. 2023, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=136170804. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.
- NBCNews.com. “From Soldier to Statesman: Bob Dole’s Life of Public Service.” *NBC News*, 18 Jan. 2018, www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/soldier-statesman-bob-dole-s-life-public-service-n837896. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.
- “Receiving a Public Funding Grant for the General Election.” *FEC.gov*, www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/understanding-public-funding-presidential-elections/receiving-public-funding-grant-for-general-election/.
- “Reform Party Presidential Casting Call - October 7, 1999.” *Cnn.com*, 2025, www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/analysis/toons/1999/10/07/lang/. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.
- “Ross Perot 1992 Presidential Campaign.” *Wikipedia*, 1 Feb. 2022, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ross_Perot_1992_presidential_campaign.
- Secret Base. “REFORM! Part 1 | Pretty Good.” *YouTube*, 1 May 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqqaW1LrMTY. Accessed 26 May 2025.
- Secret Base. “REFORM! Part 2 | Pretty Good.” *YouTube*, 14 Sept. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qq9YDwPatGk. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.
- Secret Base. “REFORM! Part 3 | Pretty Good.” *YouTube*, 21 Sept. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwbliS6QSyw. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.
- “States of Change.” *Center for American Progress*, www.americanprogress.org/article/states-of-change-3/.
- Wikipedia Contributors. “Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 12 Feb. 2023.