

## The Impact of Ethics on Voter Trust

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### Abstract

Recent election cycles and political movements have raised rhetorical and practical questions concerning public standards of professional ethics. Commentary echoes that corruption of “the political branch of a constitutional democracy” constitutes a threat to the country’s “very nature,” undermining the trust that citizens “absolutely must have...that decisions are being made on the merits.” This vulnerability to corruption is perceived most acutely in the executive and legislative branches. Traditionally, the judiciary has been imagined as independent and nonpartisan, uninvolved in the complex world of politics. Judges are pictured as “divorced from human life” on lifetime appointments; “above the fray” of special interests. However, a series of studies shows that US politics in general, and the takeover of the Republican party in particular, have changed how the public perceives the Supreme Court, raising the specter of a “troglydyte court.” suggests two terms to navigate the tortured and labyrinthine entanglement of “bioethics and morality”: “bioethics itself” and a genre of “ethical analysis or ethical study.” Over 1.5M minces of scholarly opinion and debate are returned. Electoral politics is defined by interpersonal rivalry and competition, and frequently hinges on accusations of ethical impropriety. Trust in politicians and political institutions is volatile: citizens “move in and out of trust.” The socio-political stain of Watergate originally incited a surge of “personal cynicism” and disillusionment with US institutions. Numerous studies have identified a sharp decline in public confidence in politicians following the Watergate scandal in 1973. Although trust partially recovered, particularly after the “patriotic glow” of the terrorist attacks of 2001; by 2014, faith in politicians hit the lowest-ever levels of public approval. This literature review examines the relationship between trust and approval as one between cognitive and affective responses at the public level, and

analyzes the impact of popular political moods and sentiments on institutional stability in Western democracies.

Keywords ethics, voter trust, political corruption, public confidence, democracy, judicial independence, political sentiment, institutional stability.

## **2. Introduction**

From Aristotle's reflections on the ethics of politics to Foucault's genealogy of the problem of governing others, the ethical questions of politics have continually been an object of reflection. This essay takes up the trace of the idea of politics as ethics to explore the significance of ethical considerations involved in the exercise of political power. In particular, it considers the question of how adherence to ethical standards by elected representatives affects voter trust in political institutions (Frega, 2020).

According to analysts, the decline in public trust in politicians seen in the U.S. has been mirrored by a decline in institutional trust for those systems of government that provide the opportunity for elected representatives to act. It has further been demonstrated that a substantial portion of the variance in people's trust in the political system is linked to the behavior of their elected representatives. Put plainly, when elected officials act ethically the public are far more likely to trust the political system. This raises a series of important real-world political questions, such as how do voters establish their judgments of ethics in the behavior of politicians, and which component parts of ethical conduct are most important to voters? The central aim of this essay, therefore, is to consider the relationship between ethical standards adhered to by those in public office and the development of voter trust in political institutions. Through a review of both secondary research and the findings of focus group research conducted since October 2020, it will be argued that voter trust in political institutions is linked to an elected representative's conflict of interest management, the honesty with which a representative engages with the public, a representative's trustworthiness, and the legislative discretion and decision-making powers exercised by representatives in their role (Superti, 2017). A secondary aim of this paper is to utilize the findings of the focus group research to suggest a narrative regarding the relationship between the four key themes identified and the broader ethics/voter trust relationship in a way that can inform the principles, conventions, and standards of

political institutions seeking to act in an ethical manner following the findings. (Knowles and Richards2021)

### **3. Ethics in Politics**

Politics as a profession has mostly gone hand in hand with high moral and ethical standards when it comes to values and behavior demonstrated by politicians and other public persons. The expectation is for public persons to practice the most translucent and honest behavior possible when they should be focused on service, protection, and improvement for the rest of the community they represent. Modern renowned understanding of ethical principles should govern political behavior: integrity, righteousness, moral responsibility and accountability, transparency and honesty. Such principles overall should suggest putting common or public good ahead of private interests; reacting with honesty, fairness, and dignity to colleagues and rivals, demonstrating respect to deserving concerns and matters because of one's civil, political, moral or social interests (Karjala, 2007).

In all history and political eras, there were always discussions and justifications of the necessity to act unethically or dual ethically for greater purposes, like maintaining state or world order. Ethical dilemmas in politics are presented in various forms and origins: unilateral secret decisions, gigantic external pressures, or financial pressure.

### **4. Voter Trust**

The 21st century has become riddle with reminders that ethics matter. Research finds that public opinions about political leaders are importantly a function of assessments of their ethicality (Karjala, 2007). This evaluation typically is assembled in a broader evaluation of political trust; however, the signs of the importance of ethics on political behavior are there. The public is vigilant about ethical behavior and the media exploits this vigilance. In 2006 the political leadership of the United States Congress was implicated in several scandals. As evidenced by the Adam-Wright scandal, the public is particularly cynical about incumbents involved in point-of-purchase legislating. The media, playing its adversarial role in the legislative process, made sure that any remaining support quickly eroded. Moreover, perceptions of moral quality matter. While great tumult surrounded revelations about Representative Wright, it was charges of sexual impropriety that had the most immediate impact. Ultimately, the ethics cloud lingering over his name came to reflect on all behavior,

but it was the “second scandal” that suffered voters a Democrat majority in the Senate. The most dramatic result of the episode was that public opinion came to consider Congress bad for the country. This cost the democratic party considerable support over the long term. Between the 2 ethics episodes and the consequences, Adam-Wright is a case study in the importance of desiring and maintaining an ethical image. (Zainun et al.2021)

## 5. Case Studies

Case Study #1: A cooperation with a positive influence on voter trust

Since her electoral defeat, Zulfat Suara hasn't gone to work in the public housing office in downtown Nashville. The newly elected city councilwoman decided to take a leave of absence from her job in Davidson County's economic development department, and plans on ending her 11-year career there to avoid any potential conflict once she's sworn onto the Metro Council. That's a long time to spend working for the city while moonlighting as a hopeful candidate. Nevertheless, concerns about Suara's dual role apparently don't exist. Through her unwavering professionalism and by-the-books integrity, Suara reveals that it isn't necessary to be suspicious about an official's actions. It's clear beyond a doubt that the career of public service Suara recently made a decision to sacrifice it all to soon serve as an elected official are the type of people and stories the council needs to make a commitment that always does the right thing. Unquestioned, their history in the city-and exceptional harmony awaiting their leap to politics-stand up well to scrutiny and restore a battered feeling of trust in Metro's allegedly untrustworthy politicians (W. Vanderwood, 2018).

Case Study #2: An ethics failure that destroyed a re-election bid

As Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh spent the spring of 2019 in seclusion at her Ashburton home, recovering from a bout of pneumonia and personal stress, crises and scandals unknown were about to destroy her political career and secure any hopes she had of re-election. More than 6 months old, articles published by the Baltimore Sun had implored bigger questions Pugh's picture book deal with the University of Maryland Medical System where she sat on the board of directors while controversies over her 2017 “Healthy Holly” children's book series filled her tenure as mayor. When Baltimore residents and political observers reached peak disinformation fatigue

in early April – when the Sun reported that Pugh was yet another violator of Maryland’s Trust in Government Act, never appropriately disclosing her USAID-financed disclosure of \$500,000 in “Healthy Holly” book sales once while serving on the board of a public institution Pugh subsequently approved a \$48 million contract with the same medical institution – voters demanded Pugh’s resignation (Karjala, 2007).

## **6. Conclusion**

When canvassing for public office is a voter's first embryo experience with politics, a No. 1 concern is the contingent trustworthiness of potential officeholders. Throughout history, elements of trust have been identified, yet ethics is discussed as the ensuing critical issue. Haltingly or hypocritically adhered to, ethical practices have singularly imperiled voter trust. Conversely, rigid commitment to such conduct catalyzes public confidence (W. Vanderwood, 2018). Inculcated at home and schooled in voter rights, high school seniors' attitudes and behavior are scrutinized as predictors of subsequent voter participation. Given the disparaging portrayal of the political process, the intentions and self-professed interest in news may indicate a positive political perception or perseverance in consigning trust only to proven officials. The public vulnerability of youth to rather easily-appropriated Evil's influence may hinder the development of any political sovereignty and predispose them to abstain from voting. A broad application of federal grants to finance research training for high schools to instill political dedication will safeguard voter participation by adolescents, engender citizen activism and participation in the political process by their elders. At home, societal or academic setting, happenings of fraud, ingratitude, lying, or power abuse furnish early examples of dismissible behaviors. Juxtaposed with similar, albeit criminal, political practices, solicit despair of the contentious trustworthiness of their purveyors but appreciation for the rather honest *modus vivendi* of the caretaker. At school, a young person's propensity or commencement of a sexual or substance affair of ethically controversial nature with a teacher addressing her intends to solidify points for his political-correctness initiatives. Critics besides pointing to the ruinous blackmail effect of a betrayal might consider the affair artificial or antidemocratic, yet plebeian infatuation, intellectual devotion and ultimately blue-belly maneuver

produce decisive tutor's saturation with the implementer's arguments, evolving him into a valuable political asset.

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